

MEDITATIONS
ON THE
APOSTLES' CREED

J. G. H. BARRY, D.D.



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MEDITATIONS
on the
APOSTLES' CREED

BY

THE REVEREND J. G. H. BARRY, D.D.

Author of

"Meditations on the Office and Work of the Holy Spirit,"
"The Christian's Day," Etc.

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 To the Memory of My Mother.

PREFACE

I began to write these meditations in response to an invitation to give a course of spiritual instructions ; but circumstances altered, and the course was not given beyond the first six meditations. I had, however, become interested in the work and went on with it, and subsequently used some of the meditations in retreats given in two Religious Houses. Later, the meditations were used as parochial meditations in my parish of S. Mary the Virgin. I now venture to print them in hopes of a wider audience.

In revising them for the press I have not thought it needful to remove all traces of their origin and first use ; and there will be found occasional allusions to matters pertaining to the Religious Life and to parochial conditions. I keep these, trusting that the meditations will be read by some, at least, of those who listened to them when they were delivered, and that they will not regret to have old memories revived.

The object that I have kept always before me has been so to present the teaching of the Creed that the practical bearing of its doctrinal statements on the daily life of the Christian may be clear, and that the passage from intellectual acceptance to effective action may be facilitated. If I have failed in this, I have failed in the purpose with which I set out.

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THE FIRST MEDITATION

THE FIRST MEDITATION

I BELIEVE

Let us listen to the Word of God —

AND the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

Let us picture —

The creation of man. His creation is the end of a long process. The earth has gradually passed out of the state of chaos to an ordered state wherein it becomes possible that life can exist. We see the long procession of living forms passing from those lowest forms that we can scarcely distinguish from the not living, to the complex forms of the higher

animals. Some of them look like men, even seem caricatures of men; but they are not men. Then there is a new act of God. God breathes into that which is mere dust of the earth the breath of life, and it becomes a living soul. It has been changed from the likeness of the animal to the likeness of God. Let us contemplate the first Man, endowed with self-consciousness, recognising that he is different from the brutes about him.

Consider, first —

That God, in creating man, was creating a being in some sense like himself. His end was to bring the creature into union with himself; and between God and the brute creation there was no point of contact. That the creation should be raised to God, it was needful that God should stoop to the creation. If the creature was to partake of him, he must impart himself to the creature. So man was made in the Divine Image. There is given him the power of knowing God. We should describe this to-day by saying that man has a spiritual nature.

Think of the love of God that is implied in this creation of man. It was not to enjoy the gifts of the natural world that God made man; man could have enjoyed those as an animal. Man was made to enjoy God. God desired to impart himself. He

made man to be a partaker of his own immortality and glory.

Consider, second —

That the process which was incomplete in the first man, is become complete in you. Human nature, in the Incarnation, has been taken up into God, and is permanently raised to heaven. You have been taken into the Incarnate Body of Christ and raised to dwell with him in heavenly places. Consider what possibilities that implies for you. Here, in this world, we are only at the beginning of our course. We are beings of infinite possibilities. This spiritual nature of ours, that we feel so dimly here, has in it the promise and the potency of an heavenly realisation. It is such a tremendous thing to be the child of God *now*; but what of the future? "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be." Through all the ages of eternity we shall grow near and nearer to him; the powers of our spiritual personality will expand with the demands made on them and the opportunities placed before them. If the love of God, now seen darkly, can transform us here; what shall it be when we see face to face, and know even as we are known?

Let us, then, pray —

For a deeper realisation of the possibilities of our nature; that we may think of our present attainments as but feeble steps towards our true destiny. Pray for closer union with God in whose image we are created.

O God, with whom is the well of life, and in whose light we see light; increase in us, we beseech thee, the brightness of divine knowledge, whereby we may be able to reach thy plenteous fountain; impart to our thirsting souls the draught of life, and restore to our darkened minds the light from heaven; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

.

I am going, in these meditations, to consider with you the Articles of the Apostles' Creed. We usually think of the Creed from a dogmatic standpoint, as it states for the intellect the truths of the Christian Revelation. But there is another point of view from which we may consider it, and one that is very profitable—the devotional. Dogma is for the purpose, not of satisfying the curiosity, but of supporting the spiritual life. Dogma is good for me in proportion as I can assimilate it and translate its truths from propositions received by the intellect to active, energising principles of conduct in my

personal experience. We shall, no doubt, have to return to this point later on.

To-day I want you to think with me of the fact that the profession of faith is a personal matter. *I* believe, we say. It is a personal adhesion to, and a personal action upon, the truth. The ground of our profession lies in the fact that we have a personal relation to God. The end of the Incarnation was to effect that relation, and its outworking in personal religion means for us the strengthening of that personal relation.

What a wonderful thing it is that there should be such a relation as that! The two terms of the relation seem so utterly remote! There is the infinite and eternal God; and there is the creature whom he has made. Men have been so stunned by the thought of their own insignificance in the universe that they have despaired of the possibility of knowing God at all; and have rejected religion, with its claim that God cares for man, as an inconceivable absurdity. But it is just the wonder of the Revelation that it puts aside this, the almost commonsense view, and makes known to us the love of God and the care of God for the individual soul. No doubt, "the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament sheweth his handiwork"; but nevertheless, I am not lost in the vastness of the creation, but stand forth God's creature too; nay, his redeemed child,

to add my voice to the mighty chorus. I can indeed feel that the harmony of that chorus is not perfect till I have contributed my personal note of praise and adoration; till I too have said, I believe in God.

It is the assertion of my complete and independent personality. That is my ultimate significance, that I am an entity in myself; that there is some determining force in me that makes my action a distinct thing. That is what gives it value.

There have been those—there are still those—who have looked upon personality as an impossible thing or an evil thing. The Pantheist denies the personality of God. God, to him, is the infinite life of the universe, palpitant in every blade of grass, revealing itself in the song of the bird, realising itself in the myriad-formed life of nature. Conscious life is but a bubble on the surface of the infinite unconscious life of the world. We rise out of that life to a momentary consciousness and seem to ourselves to be independent personal existences; but at last

the sunrise comes:

The dew-drop slips into the shining sea.

To some who have taken this view of our self-conscious personality, it has seemed a very awful thing, because it seems to them to imply a certain separation from the divine life of the universe. We

are tossed out from that life into some separate and restless existence; we throb and agonise with the pain of an individual life; we wander homeless through the fields of earth, unquiet in our separateness; we are exiles from God, and our only thought should be to escape from exile and return to him; to escape from mortal existence into the abyss of the unknown life where one loses this restless, separate, suffering personality in the divine unconsciousness of the All. Death is triumph and escape; then we may say to the restless heart,

rest then forever,
Thou hast throbbed thy fill.

But to life enlightened by Revelation this were the supreme misfortune. The last thing that one would lose would be just this eager, throbbing personality; for it is the possession of that that enables us to know and love God. God is a person; and in my own way, and under my own limitations, I am a person too. There can be between us, therefore, that intimate relation that we call personal; a relation of love and sympathy and knowledge; a relation of action and mutual intercourse. I can understand God because I am made in his image and renewed in his likeness. I can love God because I am like him in the nature that he has created and has himself assumed. The loss of

personality would be to me infinite loss—the loss of all that gives me significance, the loss of conscious communion with God.

But when I ask myself just what my personality is, I do not find it easy to define or to describe. Personality seems to exist in my feeling of oneness that endures through all changes; of separation from all others; of the possibility of separate and self-originated action. I am conscious of myself, and that self appears to be quite like a multitude of other selves, and yet it is quite distinct from them all. My profession of belief, for example, is a distinct act expressing a unique allegiance to the God in whom I believe. We shall get at this matter best, I think, not by trying to find a complete definition of self, but by looking at the manner in which self acts in the affirmation of belief.

The first element of personality that I discover is the self-conscious reason. I am able to understand propositions; to discern likeness and unlikeness in the world about me; to make comparisons, to draw inferences; in short, I can interpret the world. There is a correspondence between myself and the universe that makes it possible for me to move in it freely as one to whom it is not a closed book; I can comprehend it through study. Now it is this power that I bring to bear on the

facts of Revelation as they are presented to me by the Creed. Within limits, and so far as is necessary for me for the guidance of my life, I understand these facts. When I say, "I believe in God," no doubt I do not understand all that "God" may mean, but I do know that I have a perfectly definite meaning that is then present to my mind. The word "God" transcends my meaning; but whatever God is in himself, my meaning is included. And the same is true of the other articles of the Creed.

My primary attitude toward the Creed, then, is an attitude of understanding. My reason must deal with each proposition and penetrate its meaning, and set its objects before me as intelligible objects of thought. There is, to be sure, the attitude of the child or of the ignorant person before the same fact, accepting what it is taught; but that is an attitude of the will rather than of the reason; the passive acceptance of another's reason, rather than the exertion of one's own.

We need to remember that this effort of the reason in understanding is a dependent action, its success being conditioned on the submission of ourselves in reason, as in all things else, to the will of God. It must not take place in proud and complacent reliance on self. In seeking to understand the meaning of our Creed we have to re-

member that the Creed is the Revelation of the mind of God. We see into these mysteries so far, and only so far, as he has willed to unveil them. To comprehend them at all needs something more than just the exercise of the human understanding; it needs the exercise of that understanding enlightened by God himself. He that would seek to understand must pray constantly for the gift of understanding, which is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

It is easy to see that the purely rational attitude is an imperfect one. One can believe all the articles of the Christian Faith without being in any real sense of the word a Christian. Yet this first act of our personality, this first step of intellectual comprehension, may be fruitful if it leads to the wonder and the awe which God and his works inspire in the imaginative mind. "Transcendent wonder," Carlyle defined religion; and that certainly is the root of the matter. But the cold light of the reason does not contain this wonder; and in mentioning it we are moving on to the second element of our personality which comes into operation to complete the act of belief, the feelings.

The feelings or the emotions are stirred to action by the contemplation of the facts of Revelation. It is customary to say that the feelings are not and cannot be the test in matters of religion.

That is perfectly true. We cannot judge of the truth of a doctrine by its appeal to our emotions. We cannot judge of the value of a prayer by the amount of feeling that we can put into it. When I receive the Blessed Sacrament I cannot judge of its effect by the amount of emotion that it stirs. When I go through the religious routine of my day I cannot estimate its spiritual value by its conscious reaction. Superficially, emotion is a matter of nerves and temperament mostly. But all that does not hinder that the emotions, as an element of personality, have a very important part to play in religion. Our feelings are what stimulate us to action, and action is easier in proportion as they are stirred. Persuasion that is addressed to the intellect alone is apt to be ineffective; it must include the emotions in its appeal. The feelings more often control the reason than the reason the feelings. We are attracted or repelled by objects that excite corresponding emotions in us. "The reason is the faculty that enables us to frame a mental picture of the world corresponding to the external reality. It would show that the total suffering caused by the destruction of the world was greater than the suffering caused by the scratching of my finger. But unless I were benevolent to feel for others, the bare fact would not impel me to scratch my finger to save the

world. . . . If I were malevolent instead of benevolent, it might have the contrary effect. . . . The reason may regulate and guide the passions by enabling us to compare their objects. It cannot supply the place of the passions."

Now the facts of the Christian Revelation are such as are calculated to stir emotion and stimulate action. The glory and the beauty of God; his kindness and compassion; our dependence upon him and his loving care of us; the figure of the Incarnate Saviour and the incidents of his earthly life; the moving power of his passion and death; all these appeal directly to my emotional nature. I may be convinced by a treatise on the atonement; I am moved by the sight of a crucifix. A treatise on Providence forces the assent of my reason; but the vision of the Good Shepherd seeking the lost thrills me with love and gratitude.

Complete religious experience, because it demands the complete action of the personality, demands the exercise of the emotions. The appeal to them is legitimate; the exercise of them is necessary. The provision for worship with such surroundings as shall excite in us the sense of awe, stir in us that feeling of the mysticity of things, which it is largely the function of ritual to produce, is not legitimate merely, but its proper function. Lights and vestments, incense and bells, are

not a puerile æstheticism, but a rational use of means to produce desirable ends; to evoke habitual feelings, to excite emotions that shall facilitate the transition from objects intellectually conceived to the action appropriate to them. If ritual is illegitimate then are all the arts. If it is legitimate to produce emotional states by music and oratory, then it is by ritual. The preacher who in some bare Meeting House has stirred his audience to a high emotional pitch no doubt thinks of himself as having appealed to their intellect; but in reality he has effected nothing more than is effected by the ritual that he despises. Modern education has grasped this fact which was perceived by religion from the beginning, and has set itself to produce the intellectual and moral habits that it wants, not by drill in intellectual formulæ but by the reiteration of action calculated to produce the required habit. It is recognised that a flag drill is better than a lecture on patriotism for the purpose of stirring emotion toward one's country. People who do not believe in prayer as a means of moving God, believe that the practise of prayer has an exceedingly beneficial effect on the character of the person who prays. The participation in worship that presents its objects impressively to the imagination and stirs the worshiper to emotions of love and pity and gratitude, tends to make those

qualities a permanent part of his spiritual experience in a way and with a success that no merely intellectual appeal can. We learn to understand by understanding, and we learn to love by loving; but we cannot learn to love by understanding.

For it is only through the emotional state that we arrive at action. It is useless to talk about man as though he were a being of pure reason: he certainly is not. He acts as the outcome of emotional states. It is the emotions and not the intellect that move the will. That is the last element of personality that we have to deal with—the will. Man acts when he wills to act. His whole morality is in the will. It is not the thing that my reason assents to, it is not the thing that emotionally stirs me, it is the thing that I will to do that determines my character. Rational assent to the facts of our Lord's life does not make me his disciple. Vivid admiration of his devotion to his mission and of his self-sacrificing death in fulfilling it will not change my character to one like his. It is the efficacious will to be like him that changes my character and leads me to follow the blessed steps of his most holy life. All who would lead a Christian life must in the first place attend to the nature of their willing.

I become what I will to become: that is the maxim that we need before us all the time. I may not be to-day what I will to be. My character may

be imperfectly disciplined; my passions may be unsubdued; I may not have succeeded in dominating my circumstances. Still I do not despair: I never despair of anything, for I am certain that I shall become what I will to become. If the will is in me to realise myself as the child of God I shall ultimately succeed. Great holiness is great willing.

In speaking of these elements of personality—these contents of the *I*—I do not wish to be understood as implying that these are separate things or act separately. They are all functions of the one personality. My reason never acts, but I feel and will; I never feel, but I understand and will; I never will, but I understand and feel. We speak of these as separate acts because in each act one or the other of them is predominant. It is as though personality showed now one side and now another, as we ourselves show to one another, now the gloom of our depression, and then the agony of our tears, and again the fervor of our love. We are one; and our act of faith is one; but with the shifting moments it is rational or emotional or active. Or it is one or the other of these characteristically. But the perfect act of faith, the ideal attitude toward God and his Revelation, is one that may be conceived as originating in the understanding of God, and passing through the love that the vision of him kindles, to the action of a passionate devotion to his will.

THE SECOND MEDITATION

THE SECOND MEDITATION

I BELIEVE

Let us listen to the words of the Nobleman —

Sir, come down ere my child die.

Let us try to picture the scene —

THIS man is under the pressure of a great need. Some of us, perhaps, can understand something of his feelings. We have stood by the bedside of a child whom we love; we have watched through the hours the progress of the disease; we have felt the impotence of all that we could do to save. So it has been with this father. See, on his face, the lines of suffering, the symbol of his exceeding grief. Now he hears that our Lord has come out of Judea into Galilee and a ray of hope comes into his soul. Surely this man can

save, if only he will. This Prophet has saved so many others, why should not he too find help? Imagine the eagerness with which he acts upon this thought; see him come hastily into the presence of our Lord; hear the urgency of his appeal. And then how unexpected are our Lord's words. They seem almost harsh in the way in which they check the eagerness of this man: "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." But the Nobleman will not be checked; his need is too pressing, his confidence in the power of our Lord is too great: "Sir, come down ere my child die." Our Lord cannot resist that appeal. "Go thy way; thy son liveth."

Consider, first —

That what the Nobleman had heard about our Lord had probably not made a very profound impression. There is no reason to suppose that he had taken any steps to become his disciple. He had, perhaps, listened with languid curiosity to stories, of which there were, no doubt, many in circulation, of the wonderful deeds wrought by the strange Teacher; but he had not thought it necessary to acquire any definite convictions of the nature of our Lord's work or of his mission. The thing that awoke in him a conviction about our

Lord was the conviction of his own need of him. His child lay there, tossing with pain, visibly dying. Then all that he had heard about our Lord crystallized into a profound conviction of his power to help. This conviction was so deep that he waved aside all questions of proof and went directly to the heart of the matter. He throws himself in passionate faith on the person of our Lord.

I wonder if we may not see in the seeming harshness of our Lord's words to him an echo of some former thought of his own? When others had told him of some wonderful work wrought by the Prophet of Galilee had he, perhaps, expressed a skepticism toward him? Had he said, Except I see signs and wonders, I will not believe? But if skepticism there had been, it is swept away forever.

Consider, second —

How little our belief in God amounts to till we have felt a personal need of God. Our *professions* about God come of our training; they are the echo of other voices. Our *convictions* about God come out of our personal experiences of him; they are born of struggles within ourselves. With advancing experience there come to us joys and sorrows that are intolerable to bear alone; there come per-

plexities that we cannot face or untangle. In such times we recall those dim voices of others' experience, and they suggest to us a possible experience for ourselves. The doubts and hesitations which we had felt and which held us back from a living and efficacious faith; those theories that we have tried to measure in the balance of a cold and calculating reason; that sense of a judicious calm which we have felt when we have said, "Except I see signs and wonders, I cannot believe"; they all dissolve like mist before the fierce heat of our pressing need. The cry is no longer for more light, more reason, more evidence, more certain grounds for action; but just the cry of our humanity that rises out of the need of our throbbing souls, "Sir, come down ere my child die." The difficulties of belief we know no more, when we throw ourselves at the feet of Jesus, eagerly holding out to him our extreme need. There is no difficulty of faith to the one who feels the need of God.

So let us pray—

That we may see our need of God. We have so many and such deep needs. Pray that we may not be kept from the practise of faith by any superficial objections of the reason. Pray that we may prove the validity of faith by our action upon it.

We beseech thee, O Lord, in thy compassion, to increase thy faith in us; because thou wilt not deny the aid of thy loving kindness to those on whom thou bestowest a steadfast belief in thee; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Give strength, O Lord, to those who seek thee; and continually pour into their souls the holy desire of seeking thee, that at length they may attain thee; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

.

In studying the life of our Lord one of the facts that most impresses us is, that in dealing with individuals, the thing that he seeks to produce in them is a certain attitude toward himself. That attitude he calls faith. Perhaps it would be better to say that it is an attitude toward God, because those with whom he is dealing do not know the secret of his divine nature, and consequently he is always directing their thought to the Father. Practically, their attitude is toward him as the Revealer of the Father. He is careful always to make clear that what he does for men has some sort of foundation in this relation. If he performs a cure, for instance, there is not simply the objective action of the divine will producing changes in the person healed; nor is there only the subjective action of the man himself working some modification in his nervous system; but the will of God and the will

of man seem to meet and become united in the effect. Without this coöperation there can be no result. Our Lord's own power is limited by the absence of the human response. "He could do no mighty work there because of their unbelief." "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works that were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wing, and ye would not!" Again He dwells on faith as an active factor when, as often, He says to those who have been healed, "Thy faith hath saved thee." And the importance of it is emphasised in such startling sayings as, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you."

From other sides of our Lord's teaching it appears that this faith goes deeper than mere trust, or that response of confidence which would remove an antagonistic will; it is the basis upon which our entire relation to God is built up and that which renders any relation possible. "And this is the

will of him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life." "He that believeth, and is baptised, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned."

When we stand up to say our creed, then, we are doing much more than giving an intellectual assent to certain propositions which we accept as true. No doubt we are doing that, too; we do assent to the truth of certain facts, as the Incarnation, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection. But these are facts about a Person, to Whom our relation is other than the assent to His existence on a certain date and at a certain place. The Creed is not the enumeration of certain events, but the explanation of a Person; and in that Person we affirm that we believe. It is only of a person that we can say that we believe *in* him. When we say of a human person that we believe in him, we imply a certain trust and confidence in him; we believe him to be possessed of a certain character which we call *trustworthy*. Because of this character, we are inclined, should occasion demand, to commit our property, or even ourselves, to him.

A true faith in God, then, consists in this attitude of self-committal. I believe in God when I place myself in His hands, to be controlled and guided by Him. I believe in God when I subject

my will to Him, in such wise that His known will is always the will of my life. When I say my Creed that, and no less than that, is what I am professing. But it is not merely a subject-attitude, as of one ruled by a will; it is not merely the attitude of a disciple, who would learn the will of his master; it is the attitude of a lover, who devotes himself to the service of the object of his love. The whole personality is involved in the act of faith.

In our last meditation we analysed the elements of personality, and found them to be the self-conscious reason, the emotions and the will. We saw that each and all of these is involved in each personal act, though in varying degrees. Let us make a special application of what we have learned, and try to see how the elements of personality are involved in the act of faith.

The reason has its place in the act of faith. Its function is to interpret to us the object of faith. The object of faith must first of all be intelligible before we can embrace it; but for its intelligibility, it is not necessary that we should be able to analyse it completely or to understand all its modes. We do not at all understand God in His essential being, as He really is. But the function of the reason is to show the

rational character of the belief in God; that the positive evidences of His being are sufficient upon which to found action. That God may be presented to us as a rational object of faith, it is only necessary to show what is meant by God and not the whole content of the term. It is not necessary that all the seeming contradictions in the idea of God be removed. We are unable to recognise God's fore-knowledge, and our own freedom and responsibility. But such contradictions may be rationally held to be due to our limited knowledge of the terms of the problem. Reason has only to do with the sufficiency of the evidence for the two terms, and to recognise the limitation in its knowledge which renders their reconciliation impossible. Such difficulties are not peculiar to religion; science, too, has often to hold two facts that seem to be in contradiction, but of which, nevertheless, the evidence is sufficient to justify us in holding both.

The reason, then, has for its object to set before us in a form as intelligible as possible the content of faith. A rational faith is a faith that can state its content intelligibly. An irrational faith, on the other hand, states its content in terms abhorrent to reason. Its statements about God and the acts of God are such as contain mental or moral contradictions. Of the holders of such a faith God says, "Thou thoughtest wickedly that I am even such

an one as thyself." That is, such faith attributes to God actions and passions which are destructive of the very idea of God. Our notion of him thus becomes self-destructive. That God foreknows our conduct, and yet that we are self-determining and responsible, are intelligible statements resting on sufficient evidence, though we lack the knowledge to harmonise them. We may see dimly the way in which the answer lies, but our minds lack the data to enable them to think it out. That God predestines our conduct, and then condemns us for it, is destructive of the notion of a moral God.

So reason analyses the entire data of religion. It states what we mean by the facts of the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Real Presence. It gives us the content of moral ideas; of goodness, righteousness, justice. But having given us the meaning of the object of faith, it leaves us there. Reason does not compel us, or indeed deeply influence us, to embrace the object of faith—to make it our own. We might, for all the reason has to say, now turn our backs on the whole subject, having satisfied our curiosity about it.

When the reason has presented us with the object of faith in terms which we can understand and without internal contradictions of such a nature as to render it rationally impossible for us to accept it, our actual appropriation of the object

of faith is the outcome of our emotions. It may be that the object of faith is intelligible, but that we do not desire it. I believe various statements about God, perhaps; that is, my reason assents to them; but I only believe *in* God when I desire Him. The desire for God cannot be aroused in anyone by mere intellectual appeal. I doubt if anyone ever really became religious as the result of argument. And I am convinced that much of the lack of religion in the world is due, not to weight of evidence against it, or to lack of clearness in its presentation, but simply to lack of desire. You know a good many people who are not religious because they do not care for such objects.

Our own desire for God is the outcome of the contemplation of God as He reveals Himself in the completeness of His goodness and love and sympathy towards us, and a personal appreciation of what these things have meant in our own lives. One very real cause of the lack of faith in God of which we complain is the shallowness of our own religious experience and our lack of insight into the place that God occupies in our lives. God comes into our lives silently, and we perceive Him not. We depend upon His care as constantly as we depend upon the air for life. But in either case we recognise our dependence only by an effort.

But to some there comes a time when life reveals itself as the act of God ; when the presence of God in it becomes the supreme thing ; when God's relation to life is perceived to be, not an occasional action, but a constant and pervading influence. Then it is that we rise from the level of faith that accepts facts, to that which commits itself to a Person. Now, God is one towards whom we can feel emotion, from whom we can expect a response. Prayer which has tended to be a routine duty or vague aspiration now becomes a conscious communion, the loving relation of person with Person. Our confessions become the outpouring of the heart at the feet of the God whose love we grieve to have wounded, the penitence of the child that feels all the waywardness of its sin, and all its stupidity. Our absolutions are the evidence of the love and sympathy of the Father that receives us again to the fulness of His favor. Our communions are the times when in a divine intimacy we actualize our relation to our Redeemer and dwell in him and he in us.

There can be no deep faith without such emotional relation to its object. The intensity of the realisation of this relation is greater in some cases than in others, but some there must be. We may, without emotion, respect and trust a human being, but without it we cannot confide ourselves to any-

one with that perfection of self-surrender that is love; still less can we confide ourselves to God in the act of faith. If I realise what the care of God for me means; what love is implied in His ceaseless thought for my life; what of personal intention was involved in calling me into existence and bringing me into union with himself; my answer cannot fail to be that of a self-offering to him which is warm with a love that seeks ever nearer and deeper intercourse with him.

It may seem that throughout the act of faith the will is passive. But that is very far from being the case. Through the whole act of faith the will is operative. As soon as we understand the object of faith, that is, God in a certain attitude towards man, the will impels us toward him. When God is presented to us simply as an hypothesis of the intellect, we will to believe in him. And as he reveals himself more and more in experience, we will with ever increasing power to accept him. It is the will that prevents our emotion towards him from evaporating in a vague sentiment without action. The tendency of emotion is to be satisfied with itself, to rest content in the conscious pleasure that it creates. The will steps in to prevent this. It forces the passive emotion into activity. The will urges the intellect to more intense effort to understand, and the emotions to more intense ac-

tivity to embrace, the object of faith. Finally, it is the will that carries us across the gulf that lies between intellectual and emotional appreciation which may remain utterly barren to energetic action.

The state of faith, then, is the state of a thoroughly aroused personality, acting throughout its whole extent, regarding its object from every possible point of view, and reacting toward its every manifestation. Such a faith as that is itself an organ of vision. It constantly gets deeper into its objects, if I may put it that way, and interprets them to itself with increasing clarity. I suppose this is because an exercised faith has resulted in a relation of sympathy between the believing soul and God. Without sympathy our understanding of any person is very limited, our understanding of God is impossible. But where there is sympathy, there is instinctive understanding. We do not have to reason to our conclusion, we just know that it must be so. We know what God approves and disapproves because we are so filled with love of him that we understand his mind without the need to search in books of morals and the like. This is that mind that St. Paul speaks of when he says, "Let this mind be in you that is in Christ Jesus." This is that being taught of God which is so complete and satisfying a thing that we need not that any man should teach us. This is the ful-

filment of that prophecy that we should all be taught of him. One who has such faith feels his life touch God all the time. He is conscious of such complete harmony with God that he has no fear of misinterpreting the will of God.

Of course this faith that I have been describing I have been describing in its finished state. One may be a very good Christian and not yet find oneself possessed of this faith in its completeness. But if anyone has any faith at all it must correspond to this description, *as far as it goes*. It must be like it in direction, if not in degree. There is not some other faith that is the possession of ordinary people and serviceable to them. Whoso has faith, has this kind of faith, though its degree be not as high. They may never have made analysis of it to see what it looks like, but if they will do so they will find that it looks like the picture I have drawn. And whoever not having faith and would have it, must seek in it the exercise of all the elements of his complex personality.

The fruit of such a faith is a relation with God that nothing can disturb. After God has become a reality to me in the experience of my life no theoretical attack upon my faith can shake it in any degree. I am certain with the certainty of experience; and that certainty makes itself evident in my conduct. One who possesses faith approaches

the facts of life with a certain self-collectedness which is the sign of a confident mastery. Are there objections hurled at my reason, philosophies and sciences that deny my God? Never mind: I cannot answer them perhaps with the demonstration of reason, but at least I can say to them, "The God whose very existence you deny is my daily companion and friend." Do the facts of life press hard upon me so that the light seems to fade out for me, and sorrow and suffering—my own or others—seem the most prevalent fact of life, and I cannot see the goodness of God? Never mind; goodness is no doubt something greater than I had thought it to be. It is so great that it does not find it impossible to include pain and sorrow, as well as joy and peace. I am content, in any case, to trust the God who has trusted me by making me his own child and sending me forth to serve him.

THE THIRD MEDITATION

THE THIRD MEDITATION

I BELIEVE IN GOD

Let us listen to the words of God —

I am that I am.

Let us picture the scene —

MOSSES is standing in astonishment before the Burning Bush. We seem to see him, at first, watching his flock that is feeding in the wilderness. It is a rocky waste, and the pasturage is scanty. Moses is looking out idly over the plain. Perhaps he thinks of his old life with his people in Egypt. He remembers their slavery. He himself is well away from it. But is it well? Ought he not to be with his people, bear-

ing their burdens and sharing their sufferings? We think of him as recalling the promises of God. How clear that promise to Abraham sounds: To thee and to thy seed will I give this land. It is not so much, What has become of the promise, as, What has become of God? Why did he not fulfil his promise? Why did the centuries flow by and God make no sign? And then a Bush before him—a common bush—breaks into flame. What has set it a-fire? He watches for it to burn up. But it burns on, unconsumed. He draws near and hears a voice. God has come.

Consider, first —

Moses had been in exile many years. He had married and settled in the land of Midian. It might easily have happened that the thought of his people had faded into a pleasant dream. It would have seemed so far off, after forty years, that life in the House of Bondage, the years of favour at the court, the crisis that had preceded his flight. Israel's God, the God of his fathers, might also have well grown a vague memory. But it seems clear that in the silence of the wilderness in the profound solitude in which so much of his life was passed, the thought of Moses had dwelt much on the idea of God. God had become plainer

to him. He was quite different from the grotesque idols that covered Egypt. God was eternal, immortal, invisible. But his power was very evident in this wilderness, with its rocks tossed up into mountains; in those innumerable stars that stud the heavens. Above all, Moses had come to know God in the quietness of his own soul. There, in his meditations, the Infinite Spirit spake to him. It was in the silence of the wilderness that Moses came to know God as no one had ever known him before. But there had been perhaps no revelation like this, when God spake out of the Bush and proclaimed himself and Moses' mission.

Consider, second —

How much do we know of God? And whence do we derive this knowledge? We have the exterior knowledge that is given by the Creeds; but have we more than that? Have we the knowledge that comes when God speaks to us face to face as a man speaketh to his friend? Such knowledge is a voice in the midst of our souls. It comes in prayer and meditation and communion. We cannot define it for others, but we ourselves are sure that God is with us. Our thoughts can detach themselves from earth and go to God. We remember moments when God has been almost sensible

to us; moments when there was no possible doubt of his presence, no mistaking of his will. We know in such moments that God is, and that he calls us. It is on this that we stay ourselves in those long reaches when we are unconscious of God.

So let us pray—

For intenser vision of God: for the power of meditation that will detach us from the earth, and open our souls to God. Pray to desire the knowledge of God.

Almighty and Everlasting God, Who hast given unto us thy servants grace, by the confession of a true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the Eternal Trinity, and in the power of the Divine Majesty, to worship the Unity; we beseech thee to keep us ever steadfast in this faith, and evermore defend us from all adversities, who livest and reignest, one God, world without end.

Almighty God, whom truly to know is everlasting life; grant us so to know the Son Jesus Christ, to be the way, the truth and the life, that following the steps of thy Holy Apostles, we may steadfastly walk in the way that leadeth to eternal life, through the same thy Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

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Moses as he stood before the mystery of the Burning Bush was to receive a new revelation of the will of God for himself and for his people. But he was not now for the first time to learn of God. He knew God already; and if one could have asked him when and how he came by that belief, he would, no doubt have answered, as we would answer, that he learned it in his childhood. Subsequent knowledge, whether gained from the elders of his own people, or from "the wisdom of Egypt," whether it came through traditional lore, or through silent meditation on Arabian plains, was but the unfolding, the clearer statement, of the belief in God which had been his since he could think at all.

Who discovered God? No one, and every one. There was no day when a man came to his fellows and said, in tones of awe or of rapture, "There is a God." The discovery of God was never a great scientific or philosophical discovery of the investigating mind, as the discovery of the law of gravitation, or of radium. Wherever men were at any time, there was the knowledge of God. They knew God dimly, no doubt, but with sufficient knowledge. The knowledge of God is born with the human child, for the child lives at all only by the Presence of God, and in some dim way is conscious of that Presence. Wherever the child is

born, and whatever the language it speaks, it finds in its own dependency, in its own need, the clue that guides to God. When its mother bids it look out at the wondrous world that it is born into and tells it of the mysterious power that made this world; when she bids it hearken to its conscience that it may hear the voice of the unseen Presence that guides it; the child understands. That is the wonderful thing, that the child responds to the thought of God and comprehends it in an effective way. It has what one can only describe as a consciousness of God. When it is taught its first prayer, that wonderful act of faith which is the speaking out into the silence and the darkness in the certainty of being heard, the child needs no urging or explanation; its soul answers the call of God and speaks to him. We know God because God knows us: and there is no darkness of heathenism in which his voice is not heard; no shape so grotesque in which the perverted imagination of man has conceived him, in which he does not recognise the striving of the creature to find him, and reward the striving with the vision of himself.

Innumerable books have been written to prove to us by irrefutable logic the existence of God. The fact that men go on writing the books, striving with ever new ingenuity of argument to bring other men to their way of thinking, would seem

to show the futility of the books and the unsatisfactory nature of the arguments. If the continuance of man's belief in God had depended on the books of the theologians and the philosophers, it would have vanished long ago, except perhaps as a philosophical doctrine, the cherished possession of a chosen few. A religion cannot be supported by the sort of means that are used to propagate a philosophy. A religion is supported not by subtlety of brains, but by the satisfaction it gives to the intimate needs of our nature. It justifies itself by finding and satisfying those needs. I do not mean that the arguments for the existence of God have no force and are of no use. They have both force and value; but not the value usually attached to them. Do I believe in God because of the argument from causation; because my thought demands the existence of a great first Cause? Not at all. The trained mind of the philosopher may demand a first cause, but the plain man feels no such need. Do I believe in God because the most perfect Being of which I can conceive must have necessary existence? Not at all. I even have considerable difficulty in getting into my head what the argument really means. My belief in God has a basis quite different from, and more stable than, metaphysical subtleties. I do not wait till I know metaphysics to know God. But after I know God

the science and the metaphysics help me to think about him; help me to understand the world and myself in relation to him. They classify my thoughts and brush away my difficulties—the difficulties, after all, that they themselves have raised to perplex me. For such purposes they are good, but I did not get my faith from them, nor shall I abandon it if they fail me.

Yes: there is the point that is so often missed in our striving to prove to ourselves or others the existence of God. Our conviction of God is a faith, not a science or a philosophy. It would not be very serviceable otherwise. Few are capable of science or philosophy; but the veriest child needs a faith, cannot by any means get on without one. The child, as the philosopher, needs God. And God makes himself known to the child—he sometimes hides himself from the philosopher: or rather the philosopher hides himself from God behind the mists of human thoughts in which he encloses himself. God is the object of faith, and the child's faith can reach him, when the philosopher's knowledge fails. The point about faith is that we do not expect to prove its object as we prove the objects of merely human knowledge. We know that the field of faith and the field of knowledge are not the same. They are, as it were, at different levels of the human mind. Knowledge comes through our

senses and is put in order by our intelligence. Faith and hope and love are activities of the human spirit which justify themselves by processes other than those of science or philosophy. Their objects are known immediately by the spirit itself.

I do not at all mean to imply that the objects of faith are uncertain, or indeed less certain, than the objects of knowledge. That would not be true. If a comparison were possible, I should say that they were more certain; i. e., my conviction of them is more intense and touches a deeper stratum of my personality. What I mean is that the processes by which we attain to certainty are quite different in the two cases. In knowledge we attain to certainty through investigation, argument, proof. We decline to assent to what is alleged as fact, if there is not a satisfactory degree of evidence for it. But faith is the vision of the Spirit that sees its object, and in the act of vision knows its truth. It is a bond that unites me to the object of my faith, as love in a bond that unites me to the object of my love.

This is all very well, you say; but there must be some proof, some justification, at any rate, for the act of faith, outside the act itself. Yes; there is a justification, and that justification is the effect of faith upon life. I do not mean that we are to seek for the justification in the differences we may be

able to observe between the lives of those who believe and those who do not. There should be, and no doubt is, a difference there. But that is not the best place to make our observation. It is not easy to get at the motives for another's conduct; it is almost impossible to get an account of their inner life. In the case of the people among whom we should naturally conduct our observation, there is to be expected close conformity to the moral standards of the time and place. No; the effective place to make our observation is in our own lives. We have faith in God: what has been the effect of that faith in the conduct of our lives? That is a question that we can answer with little fear of mistake. And the attempt to answer it at once brings out the fact that there is a type of faith that is effectless, and therefore merely nominal. It is really not a faith at all, but rather a conventional acceptance of other people's faith. It has no living existence in the life. We may put aside this state of soul that a rigid self-examination sometimes unmasks as not concerning us. But in our own experience, what effect has belief in God had? Surely it has governed the whole development of our lives. If it were not for it we should not be calling ourselves Christians. If it were not for it we should not have experienced a vocation to the religious life; we should not have sacrificed so

much of what all men value to the special service upon which we have entered. Our belief in God has been tremendously significant in the shaping of our lives. But that is not quite the whole question. The rest of the question is: Has the effect in life justified the belief on which we have acted? Do I find in the priesthood, and you in the religious life, evidence of the truth of the belief? Perhaps we can get at it better by the question, If I were to begin again, would I act in the same way on the same belief? Have I experienced such results that I find my action fully justified?

Now, of course, belief in God does not stand or fall with the reality of our vocation. Only if the vocation be true it gives us a serviceable test to apply. But it could perfectly well be that our vocation were mistaken, and yet the faith itself in no wise shaken. The test is good only as a positive test; if the experiment is successful, the belief is justified. But if the experiment is not successful, the belief is not therefore discredited. For there are other tests.

Speaking of life generally, the test is to be sought in the development of the spiritual life; the life that has conscious relation to God. Has the belief been productive in me of the fruits of righteousness? I can test myself easily enough by the comparison of my life with the Gospel standard: with

the qualities that are embodied by our Lord in the Beatitudes, for example, or by St. Paul in the fruits of the Spirit. I know well enough whether the motives that are implied in these are the motives that are dominant in my own life. I put it as a matter of motive advisedly, rather than as a matter of result. I fancy that we are rather incompetent judges of the results; but we are perfectly competent judges of the motives that are controlling us. Of the exact place we have arrived at in the course Godward we may not be very certain; but the general direction of the movement is clear enough. And the direction of the movement is more important than the rapidity of it. If we are moving Godward, under the impulse of the Gospel motives, we may conclude that the faith in God from which we started is justified by the result.

There is another application of this test that I propose with some hesitancy. Yet where it is successful it is the absolutely convincing test that needs no supplement. I hesitate because it is not a fatal thing if one cannot stand the application of it. What I mean is that in some lives there is a direct experience of God, a sense of personal communion with him. God speaks and the soul answers: God communicates his will and the soul obeys. I believe that there may be good Christian lives that have no such experience; that have no conscious commun-

ion with God. Still, in most, if not in all, cases of that kind, I am inclined to think that the trouble is, not that God is not present to the life, but that the life has not learned to recognize him when he manifests himself, and therefore interprets his manifestation as something other than it really is. God calls, and the child Samuel runs to Eli, because he does not yet know the word of the Lord. It is only later, after instruction, that he lies still and says, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." God's voice sounds, and we have habituated ourselves to think of it as simply the emotional reaction of prayers or sacraments. We interpret it as the natural prompting that comes through our conscience. We say to ourselves: I was simply excited, I was nervously overwrought. We put the experience down to the account of the imagination. In reality it was the Present God. Such states, if we will understand them, are states of deep spiritual experience, ladders set up from heaven to earth, if only we knew how to climb.

But with others there is neither doubt nor hesitation. We know that God is here and speaks. We move in the consciousness of his presence, we are thrilled with the sense of his nearness, we are able to speak to him fully and frankly as to a friend. The consciousness of his presence gives my prayer its vitality; I speak eagerly as to one I but just

miss seeing. Or it may be that the sense of the presence hushes me into silence. I just open the doors of my soul and my God enters in. To most of us, I imagine, this vivid sense of God is not given often, but when it is given there is no mistaking its reality. If I have known it only once, I know, as a personal experience, that God is; I find my belief in him justified. There is no need of further evidence. I turn over laboured pages of argument to prove the existence of God. But it is waste time for me: I know.

But there come moments of relaxation and hesitation. Do I know? Might there not be some simple physiological or psychological explanation of my experience, I ask myself. And I answer, Yes, if that experience stood alone; but it does not. It is, can we not say, an universal Christian experience; in all ages and places of the Christian Church this is the thing that men have testified to as the ultimate justification of their faith. The voice of the Saints is unanimous in this testimony. They say plainly and simply that they have found God to be a reality in their spiritual experience. They have not known of him solely through the testimony of others, or as an inference of the reason, or a postulate of philosophy, but they have known him in the intimacy of spiritual communion. And more than that: It is not merely a Christian ex-

perience, it is a race experience. The united voice of humanity raises its unswerving testimony that it has known God. After all, though there are many religions, there is only one God: and however men may have named him, and by whatever rites they may have worshipped him, he has been the same. He was not the God of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles also; and it was the same God who was ignorantly worshipped at pagan altars, whom the Apostle made known. And the God who in his infinite mercy sought us and died for us when we were yet sinners—are we not to believe that he seeks all men also, and that he manifests himself everywhere that men seek him honestly, under whatever name? Their testimony, who shall reject, when they say that they, too, have experienced God? This race experience of a personal God touching human life is the irrefragible testimony to the reality of God. No argument can detach us from the God of experience.

Belief in God, then, is securely founded. It remains that we question ourselves as to its hold on our lives. No doubt the moods of intimate communion are transient, but their effects ought to be permanent.

The first effect that one would look for would be the conscious reference of the life to God in all its details. This will show itself in the decline of wil-

fulness, of self-assertion, of anxiety. That is, the presence of God is experienced as a calming power. Disturbance can come into my life only through my self-assertion, through my setting up an independent will. I am conscious, when I examine myself, of an immense amount of restlessness, of fretting against the circumstances and limitations of my life. There are days of rebellion; there are moments of passionate resistance; there are times of dull, passive indifference. Now the point about these is that one is always conscious, though one does not always want to acknowledge it, that they proceed wholly from one's own wilful self. They need not be. One is just letting oneself down to a plane where one need not be, and has no right to be. And more important still, one is deliberately shutting God out. One knows, at the back of one's mind, that if one would just go back to God, and put oneself in his hands, all would be at peace. The thing that we are in rebellion against might not, very likely would not, be removed; but the effect of it would be quite other. It is good in such moments to repeat to oneself slowly and thoughtfully, I believe in God. It is wonderful how very small our worries become in the light of that belief: how often they vanish altogether before the name of God, as the mists vanish before the coming of the sun. We cannot be wilful or petty with

the sense of the divine presence upon us. You have seen the child, restless and peevish, stilled just by the perception of the calm eye of the older friend upon it. It is so with our fretfulness when we become conscious of the eye of God.

And the "I believe in God" is not only a source of calm, but it is a source of strength. Our work grows wearisome, and much of the weariness is that we have to do it alone. You know how work is made easier and lighter if only some one we care for will come and sit by us while we do it. We are doing the same work, but somehow we are at the same time sharing it. It is quite possible to bring God in to take this sort of share in our work. The one great support we find in the weariness of life is the sympathy of God. We are always so sure of that. Nobody else may care, but we are sure that God cares. Others may criticise the way in which we do our work, or the work after it is done; we know that God is sympathising with the effort to do it. He sees and understands what others will not—the faltering will, the tired muscles, the aching nerves. One falters on as best one may, and one almost sees the smile in the eyes of God.

One might go on quite indefinitely—belief in God is such a wonderful thing, so effective in life. But I will stop here with only one further word: and that shall be of the stimulating power of our faith.

There is so little we can do for God, we think. Rather, there is so much; the trouble is to find time for it all. There is so much; for somehow one fancies God caring a good deal for the little ministries of life. Lives of tremendous effectiveness are few. A life of careful service—anyone can give that. You remember when our Lord wanted to particularise a service acceptable to God, he did not instance martyrdom, but an act of almost trivial nature—the cup of cold water. It is significant, is it not? You are impatient sometimes, are you not, of the detail of the rule? Perhaps it seems to shut out the greater thing that you might do. But are we sure of our measures? Perhaps if we can get a willingness and love into the little thing, it will measure larger than we thought and not miss its reward.

THE FOURTH MEDITATION

THE FOURTH MEDITATION

THE FATHER ALMIGHTY

Let us listen to the words of the Prophet —

DOUBTLESS thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou O Lord, art our Father: our Redeemer; from everlasting is the Name.

Let us picture —

Israel in Exile. "By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept, when we remembered thee, O Sion." It is many years now since Jerusalem had fallen. Her walls are broken down, her palaces are desolate, her temple is a charred ruin. But the eye of the exile sees not the ruins, but the fair beauty

of the city which was the joy of the whole earth. To his partial mind Babylon is as nothing; he has no admiration for these stupendous palaces and temples. His thoughts go ever back across the weary wastes of sand which separate him from the land of his love to rest on the city chosen of God and precious, which now lies desolate and outcast. Why should it be? Would it be forever? These were the questions that were ever before his mind. He could not believe that it would be forever: however much Israel may have sinned God could not have cast them off forever. But as the years went by there was an aching doubt—perhaps forever. Among the exiles there is one man, at least, that will admit no doubt. He is a man in close communion with God; he interprets to his brethren the mind of God. He believes in no final abandonment of Israel because he believes that God is Israel's Father. "Doubtless thou art our Father." He is a Father to be relied on even when the love and intercession of Abraham fail.

Let us consider, first —

The inner life of Israel depended on its fidelity to the election God had made of it to be his Son. Whatever God might be to other nations, he had revealed himself to Israel as a Father. The voca-

tion of the nation was the vocation of adoption: "Out of Egypt have I called my Son." Recall all that had meant in the history of Israel, all of tender care and watchfulness. But more than that: It formed the basis of appeal to God. Israel might, if it would, at any time claim the rights of a Son; that it had not the wisdom to do so, was its weakness and disaster. As a whole, the nation had despised its vocation; therefore it was here in exile, lamenting too late its failure to understand the thought of God for it. Lamenting, yet not altogether despairing; for the promises were so splendid, the love of God in the past so evident, his patient forgiveness so often experienced, that the present darkness was lightened by some gleams of hope. The prophets were sure that Israel was not cast off forever. They felt that God's Fatherhood was too deep and significant a thing, and Israel's Sonship too closely bound up in the plans of God for the future of humanity, to be altogether destroyed by the faithlessness of the nation. They could look on the present as a punishment by which the Son was being disciplined for his future career.

Let us consider, second —

We have a clearer knowledge of how much was implied in God's revelation of his Fatherhood to

Israel. We understand how right the Prophets were in feeling that this relation was an indestructible one. We can see deeper than they consciously could. We can see the method by which God was planning to bring his wanderers home; the Divine Son, taking flesh of Israel, and through that flesh making it possible that all men might become the Sons of God. The Fatherhood of God means to us at least a potential relation of God to the whole race. For ourselves it means an actual thing that has taken place, an experience through which we have passed. It means also, as it meant to the Prophet, a promise on which we can rely. God will not cast us off; and if we ourselves cut ourselves off, God waits for our return. We can at any moment cry, with a certainty of being heard, "Doubtless thou art our Father."

And so let us pray —

For the will to realise ourselves as the Sons of God. Let us pray for the vision of the Father.

Lord, our God, great, eternal, wonderful in glory, who keepest covenant and promises for those who love thee with their whole heart; Who art the life of all, and the help of those who flee unto thee, the hope of those who cry unto thee; cleanse us from our sins, secret and open, and from every

thought displeasing to thy goodness, that we may always know thee, our Father and our God.

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I believe in God the Father. It reminds us in the first place of our Blessed Lord; for the Fatherhood of God in which we profess to believe in the Creed is not God's relation to us, but his relation to his Son. What the Creed means to teach us is not now about ourselves, but about the blessed Trinity. What God is in himself we can know but dimly, and then only so far as he reveals himself to us. By searching we can find out little of God. In the Holy Scriptures God reveals himself to us as Triune—"I believe in One God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity." That is, we believe that there is one divine nature, and that in the unity of that Nature there is a trifold distinction of persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

What the relations are between these three Persons can only be conveyed to us under some sort of imagery, because there is nothing really like them on earth. What God himself has chosen to picture to us, this relation is the human relation between father and son. We are, of course, not intended to carry out the analogy into all the particulars of that relationship. What we are to fix our minds on, I suppose, is in the first place, the fact of a derived nature. The Father alone is the

source and origin of being—he is God of himself and not of another. The Father has Life in himself: He has *given* to the Son to have life in himself. That is what we mean by the eternal generation of the Son. That eternal generation is not an act that took place and thereby constituted the Son to be Son, something that he had not been before; but it is an ever subsisting relation between the Father and the Son, such that the Father has always been Father and the Son always Son. This relation is eternal as God is eternal. Therein the human analogy fails; for the human father transmits his nature to his son once for all in a single act; the generation of the Divine Son is an eternal relation between the first and second Persons of the Blessed Trinity.

The second point that is suggested by the analogy is that the relation between the Father and the Son is one of love. The fact of love is one of the facts that, apart from the testimony of the Scriptures and the Church, would lead us to believe in the Trinity. It is impossible for us to think of God as being alone. God is love; and love must always be shared. We can think of the Onliness of God: that there is none like or equal to him: we cannot think of the Loneliness of God: that he is solitary. If God exists as love, he exists as loving, and we can only think of a loving Person. Father, Son

and Holy Spirit, loving one another is conceivable: a bare unity shuts out the idea of love altogether.

But although when we call God Father in the Creed, we mean the Father of the Son, that does not mean that we have exhausted the meaning of the term. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God," says St. John, and we were taught long ago in our catechism that by baptism we were made the children of God. This childhood of which we are possessed, flows directly from the fact of the sonship enunciated in the Creed. We are the children of God because we participate in the divine Sonship of our Lord.

It is, perhaps, just as well to point out that this is not the same thing as that "Fatherhood of God" which is the favourite creed in certain quarters to-day. We might think from the intensity of some utterances that the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man is quite all that is of any importance in religion—the wheat left after the winds of criticism have blown away the chaff of theological verbiage. But the matter is not quite so simple as that: it is necessary to draw certain distinctions in regard to this famous Fatherhood of God of the liberal theologians. I have never found it conducive to truth or clearness to confound two things that are really distinct.

Now it is most blessedly true that God is the

Creator and Preserver of all things. God's love and care for all his creatures is one of the fundamental postulates of all religion. It is not true that God has a special class of favourites—the elect—and that all the rest of mankind lie under the disfavour of God. That is Calvinism, not Christianity: and it is in the reaction from Calvinism that the liberal doctrine of the Fatherhood of God has played so great a part, and gained so great a popularity. One's objection to it is rather an objection to its form and to its intention. God loves and cares for all men, but it only confuses matters to call that relation by the name of Fatherhood, which has a special sense of its own. The Fatherhood of God, as it concerns us, is a special relation, consequent upon our incorporation into the Body of Christ. Our Lord is the Only-Begotten Son of God: and we, by our baptism, are made members of him, and therefore and thereby become the children of the Heavenly Father. This relation is due to the impartation of the nature of Christ to us, and it is a bond of a closer nature than that which results from our creation. We are now in covenant with God, and are entitled, in virtue of that covenant, to the fulfilment of certain promises of God, conditional upon our fulfilment of the terms of our side of the covenant. Our relation is no longer the

undefined relation of a creature, but the specific relation of a child.

It is precisely these promises of God made in the covenant of baptism, that constitute the privileges of the Christian. These privileges are, in the first place, the grace of Baptism itself. The person baptised is regenerate and made a new creature. I feel sometimes that what one would think would be our constant thankfulness and wonder at the gift of baptism, is somewhat deadened by the fact of its distance. It is well for us to recall sometimes just what befell us then. The baptised person is taken out of the natural and placed in the supernatural order. A new gift is conferred—that of eternal life. Eternal life is not just a synonym of immortality. Our Lord did not come to make men immortal: they were immortal already by the fact of their creation. But he says that he came that we might have life. This is explained to us when St. Peter says that “we are made partakers of the Divine Nature.” That Divine and Ineffable Nature that became joined to our humanity in the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, is, through our union with that Incarnate nature in our baptism, transmitted to us, so that being one with Christ, we are made the children of God.

It throws something of glory about our common humanity when we think of it as taken up into the

Divine. It were a great thing to think of myself as the object of God's love and care: but to think of myself as his child, as the partaker of his nature, that is a thought that puts my life, its actions and its destiny, in quite another light. The child of God, even while plunged in the midst of common things, must conceive himself as, in some sense, separate from them: at any rate he moves among them as one whose ultimate destiny lies elsewhere, and who is using this world as the instrument of his development, not as the end of his being. The child of God cannot have common thoughts about common things. Even the common things are the revealers of the Divine presence, and means of the Divine action. We must all of us feel something of that urgency of vocation that possessed our Lord when he said to his Blessed Mother, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" "About the things of my Father!" The things of my Father: that is how this world appears to us. Things oftentimes twisted, and warped, and divorced from their proper use, but still the things of the Father, to be rescued and restored to his service in so far as that is possible for us. There is a sense of special vocation upon the child of God, the sense of a pressing obligation to show the Father. We watch the actions and the words of the child to see therefrom what the mind and will

of the Father is. That is our vocation. Have you ever thought of yourselves as the revealers of God? That the character of God is made known to the world by the character of you, his children? We take up the work of Christ in that regard. The world is never convinced of the truth of religion by references to past facts: when it is convinced, it is by the facts that it can see. It does not so much care about seeing Christ in the Bible, as it does about seeing Christ in Christians. What can Christ do for life now? is its perfectly natural and legitimate question: and the only effective answer, is the answer, Look at the lives of Christians and see. The weakness of Christianity at any time is the inadequacy of that answer.

We shrink—it is natural that we should—from the application of such a test as that. But can there be any other test? In any case, shrink as we may, the world insists upon its application. It insists that we shall show it what the power of the Christ-life is: and if we fail to show that it has any power over us, it declines to pursue the investigation any farther.

This effect of our daily lives, I imagine, is one of the things that we are least careful to examine ourselves about. Has the day involved sin, breach of the rules, and the like—so runs the daily examination. Has the day witnessed to the character of

God—do we ask that? Your lives here in this school—how profoundly significant they are in the course of years to the hundreds of girls that pass through here. What is the thought of God that your influence leaves? What is the impression of the religious life that they take away with them? Is it an impression of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness? I wonder. Are they attracted to the religious life?

We are the children of God: that implies the permanent relation of our lives to God. Nay, more than that: it implies the permanent presence of God in our lives. That presence is a purifying presence. When God came into our lives at our baptism, one result was the forgiveness of sins—our lives were cleaned: and if God is to stay there they must be kept clean. That we are the children of God is the basis of the confidence with which we return to him when we feel that we have sinned. Yet, after hearing many confessions, I feel that there is a missing note in them. The note of contrition is there—often it rises to a note of exceeding pain. Much too often there is a note of discouragement. But the note of love is rarely there. Yet the coming back to one's Father, with whatever shame and contrition, is fundamentally an act of love, is it not? We come, not because we fear, but because we love our Father. We come back

as his children to one who we know loves all his children, however erring. If we did not love, and were not sure of the Father's love, should we come at all? That lies back of all the *theory* of confession: but is it often present in its practise? There ought to be joy then, the joy of the child that finds itself safe once more in the Father's arms. Something of the routine feeling that necessarily goes with habitual confession might be eliminated if more of the sense of God as our refuge could go into it.

In practise we often lose sight of what is involved in the fact of being the children of God, in that it includes certain promises. There is a feeling that, I suppose, is at bottom humility, that prevents us from claiming the promises of God. That God has made promises we know, but we shrink from making any claims on the basis of them. That would appear to be, at any rate, an unscriptural attitude. The Prophets, for example, are constant and untiring in reminding God of his promises. His honor is bound up in the fate of Israel. If the chosen nation suffers disaster the heathen will be in a position that they will not be slow to avail themselves of—they will mock Israel for its reliance on the promises of God, and mock God as unable to fulfil his promises. The same attitude is commended by our Blessed Lord to his disciples,

“Seek and ye shall find: ask and ye shall receive: knock and it shall be opened unto you.” And God, in a strange parable, is compared to the unfriendly neighbour who is forced to rise by the importunity of the seeker for help. The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by force. Energetic desire is always commended to us as the attitude toward God that attains its end.

Do we shrink from this violence in our prayers? Do we shrink from making demands on God? We ought not, for God wishes us to do so. Our lives need more of boldness in our demands upon God. Boldness is the mark of intense earnestness, is the measure of what we really care.

God has given us the right to approach him at any time. The doors of heaven are always open: the ear of God is always attent unto our prayers. Why should we not storm heaven with our prayers, if we are convinced of the rightfulness of them—of the reality of our need. Why come into the presence of the Father with timid shrinking, when he has promised that he that cometh to him shall in no wise be cast out? The prayers of Christendom are so weak, so heartless, so inexpectant,—that is why they are so ineffectual. There is in us so little of spiritual energy! Would that we could pray as God wants us to pray, with an insistence that will not be refused.

It is the right of the child to be protected by its Father. That should eliminate the element of fear from our lives. The secret of the boldness of the saints is the fulness of their reliance on the Father. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me,"—that is their attitude. When men noted the boldness of Peter and John, they found the secret of it in the fact that they had been with Jesus. If we have a real experience of God, we shall be bold to go on wherever he calls us to go, and do whatever he tells us to do.

Those who are at the threshold of the religious life, one can imagine, will look often into the future with somewhat of trembling. Shall I be able to endure? When the life really closes about me, shall I not find it a horrible and unendurable monotony? Will I not fail in capacity of self-control and self-adjustment? Will I be able to keep myself in charity and obedience? No, certainly not, so long as the attitude is shall I be able to *keep myself*. But you have the right to demand that your Father shall keep you, and there can be no doubt that he will answer all demands made on him. If you fail, it will be because you fail to rely on God; because in the dark hour of temptation you rely on self, and do not lay yourself in the everlasting arms. No vocation ever failed that

conceived itself, first of all, as a vocation to God. Vocations fail when we lapse to mere notion of rule keeping, and let the personality of ourselves and others become vastly important; when we fret ourselves with our failure, rather than joyfully betake ourselves to the eternal love. There is no failure to one whose life is hid with Christ in God. As long as the life is in God, its failures are the failures of God, and God's failures, must we not believe, are in the end successes. The world of God so often seems, from our limited point of view, is a tremendous failure; but our point of view is illusion: the reality, when we see it, will justify itself. Wisdom is justified of all her children.

This relation to our heavenly Father is an eternal relation. The grave has no influence upon it. Death only brings us nearer God. We, if we have lived our lives as obedient children, look forward in hope and confidence to what lies on the other side of death. What does lie there is hidden from us in detail, but in its broad outline it is plain enough.

We shall be in a state of greater privileges and without hindrances. Though we grow here as we develop power of resistance through temptation, yet we cannot suppose that temptation is itself necessary to growth. The removal of temptation and

sin should mean a rapid spiritual expansion. We can hardly judge of the capacity of a spiritual being by what it succeeds in accomplishing under the hindrances of our present state. Our possibilities are doubtless far beyond what we can even imagine. "Now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be." They are wonderfully suggestive words—these of St. John. They seem to raise a corner of the veil that hangs between us and the future, and suggest infinite possibilities for us there. How much is involved in, "We shall be like him"; what wonderful growth in spiritual perfection.

Whatever be involved in the process of freeing our nature from the stains and imperfections of this life, which must be a part of the immediate future of the child of God when he enters the new mansion of his father, we cannot think of it as being other than a process full of joy. We shall have the certainty of our salvation and the nearer presence of our Lord. One pictures to oneself the exceeding joy with which one makes up the things that are lacking, the eagerness with which we accomplish our work. For we work with the prospect of seeing the Father, and in the wonder of that vision we shall at last be satisfied.

THE FIFTH MEDITATION

THE FIFTH MEDITATION

MAKER OF HEAVEN AND EARTH

Let us listen to the Word of God —

THE Morning Stars sang together, and all the Sons of God shouted for joy.

Let us picture —

A beautiful afternoon, let us say, by the side of the lake. It is an afternoon in spring, and is warm out there in the sunlight. There is just enough breeze to ripple the surface of the lake; in the upper reaches of the air, a stronger wind sends the clouds flying before it. Watch the shadows of the clouds as they sweep over the surface of the water, how the colour tones alter from moment to moment.

There, where a moment ago it was a shimmering sheet of intense blue, the water has changed to deep purple. See how the deep green nestles in the little curves of the wavelets. There, a deep shadow seems to throw out a hand and snatch the light off the ripples; here, the light gains the victory, and chases the shadows before it with gay laughter. See how the depth of the water is marked by the changing intensity of colour. It is a fast shifting, gleaming, sparkling floor of amethyst and emerald.

Consider, first —

God made this lake, with its ever-changing beauty. This is but one of the infinite marvels of his creation. God made that in us that we call the sense of beauty that we might be able to perceive the beauty of the creation and that our hearts might be gladdened by it. This beauty of the creature—may we not think of it as the beauty of God shining through his works? How beautiful God must be if the mere reflection of him shining through his works is so resplendent? The glory of God! Have we ever thought much of that, as, in part at least, the glory that we see in the universe—the glory of the sun, and of the moon, and of the stars? The glory of the heaven reflected in still waters, the glory of the tender green of spring-

ing leaves, the glory of the myriad-colored flowers? How the Psalmist felt that; how the beauty of the world throbs through the Psalms. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork." "Thou deckest thyself with light as it were with a garment; and spreadest out the heavens like a curtain, Who layest the beams of his chambers in the waters: and maketh the clouds his chariot, and walketh upon the wings of the wind."

Consider, second —

That the revelation of God that comes to us through the natural world is a very real one. There is no doubt a dark side to the message that it brings, but we need not think of that now. Whatever the darkness it does not destroy the light. It is true, is it not, that the beauty of the world brings God very near to us? Think how your heart has been lightened and gladdened by it: how, perchance, some wave of gloom or despondency has been lifted by the beauty of the world. We see the power of God in the earthquake and the tempest; but we see the love of God in the flowers that clothe the meadows and in the light of sunset skies. We see the immutability of God in the laws that guide the universe; but we read the character of that will—that it wills our good—in the fruits of

the ground that we gather into our garners, and in the herb that he giveth for the use of man. We are so apt to think of God as aloof from us, even when we think of his loving kindness; but one seems to find a passionate eagerness in God as one looks at the splendour of his bounty, the abundance of his provision for our good. There is enough in nature to assure us that God is love, though there be something there that we cannot reconcile with this belief.

So let us pray —

To see God more in his world: to reverence the creature as the means of making God known to us. Let us adore God in all his works.

O Gracious Father who openest thy hand and fillest all things living with plenteousness: We beseech thee of thine infinite goodness to hear us, who now make our prayers and supplications unto thee. Remember not our sins, but thy promises of mercy. Vouchsafe to bless the lands and multiply the harvests of the world. Let thy breath go forth that it may renew the face of the earth. Show thy loving kindness that our land may yield her increase; and so fill us with good things that the poor and needy may give thanks unto thy name; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

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As we look out upon the visible creation there is a mingling of light and shadow there. There are moments in which it seems to us a very dreary world; pain and struggle seem its dominant notes. Whatever of joy there is in it is transitory. Its sunshine is quenched in clouds; its flowers wither; its living beings are the prey of disease and death; the shadow of its mortality stretches black across it. But if we think a moment we shall feel that the picture may as well be reversed. The sunshine follows the cloud, if we will look at it in that way. If the flowers die, at any rate they bloomed and were a vivid joy while they lasted. And if there is death there is also life—life with implications and possibilities that death cannot touch. If there is transitoriness, it is death that is transitory: life is abiding and eternal.

Blots on the creation, we speak about; death and sorrow a huge blot, we think. But there is another side to that if we look for it. We are willing enough to accept life even conditioned as it is with suffering. Take the commonest instance of the hardness that we are wont to complain of—the death of one we love; we suffer in that death: we count it as one of the great mysteries that we should be thus called on to suffer. In the pain of it we are sometimes driven to question the justice of God. But instead of vexing ourselves with

questions that we cannot solve, let us rather ask ourselves, why we suffer? What does the capacity to suffer in the death of another imply? We suffer, do we not, because we love? It is the great gift of love that makes the suffering possible. If we did not love we should not suffer. Let us imagine that we had a choice in life: that there were offered to us life that should be without suffering, but that the price that we must pay for it should be that it be without love: or, that we could have our present human life with love, and suffering as its shadow. Is there any manner of doubt which life we should choose? When we have buried the one that we have loved, and the pain of the loss is at its intensest, would we ever accept an offer that the pain should be blotted out of our lives, if only we would consent that the memory of the past should go too? Such suggestions are intolerable. What we love, we are willing to suffer for. It was because God so loved the world that he was willing to die for it.

And admitting the mystery of evil, of pain, of loss—the mystery that we cannot fathom—still the world is not the evil place that the pessimist assures us that it is. Much that we find objectionable, we ourselves put there. In a very wide and real sense we construct our own world. The world that we actually live in, is a world that is the product of

our own temperament ; the clouds that lie across the landscape are our own shadows : the lights that sparkle on its field are the lights of our own joys. We know perfectly well how that is in the case of others. We know the effect—the cold douche as we call it—of the presence of a gloomy, complaining person. A depressed person is depressing : but equally a bright, light-hearted person lights up a cloudy day.

And probably this obvious truth has a wider reach than we are apt to suppose. Most of the gloom and hardness that we read into the material world is not really there : they are emanations from us. We exaggerate and misinterpret the phenomena of life, by relating them to ourselves : by imagining how we should feel under the like circumstances. I have always been struck, in reading the novels of Miss Austen, with the amount of pity that is there bestowed on people who are so poor as to be able to keep only a man and two maids. I never was able to excite much pity in myself for those in that lamentable situation. But it is a point of view ; and quite possibly our feeling of the suffering that there is in nature and in human life, mis-estimates the suffering that is really there.

What I want to bring out is that much of the modern thought about the world is thoroughly pessimistic and unhealthy. I believe that it is so

because the modern mind that interprets the world to us is itself morbid. It has got into the habit of looking at the world apart from God. To look at the world apart from God, has precisely the same effect as looking at life apart from love—it changes all the values, and leaves us all the sadness without the compensation. Men to-day have got to looking at the world as a uniform system governed by fixed laws. That is the necessary way of looking at it for purposes of scientific description; but it is not the only way in which it may be looked at: it is not a moral or religious way. Religion looks at this same world from the point of view of its dependence—it is the creature of God: not a creature that God made and left to itself, but a scene in which God is eternally present. What science calls laws, religion calls the immediate acts of God. Both are right for their own purposes: but the purposes are different. Religion has nothing to do with uniform laws governing the universe: it has to do with a present God guiding his creatures: a God not apart from, but in his creatures all the time. Science tells, from its point of view, of the laws of the living organism that govern its life, its growth, its death: religion knows that not a sparrow falls without our Father. There is no contradiction here: each view is true. But each views the facts from a different standpoint. It is true,

no doubt, that the present universe has been evolved in the course of ages by the action of force on matter, and that the procession of life upon it has been that that is described by the doctrine of evolution. That is the scientific description. But it is also true that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth: that he made the world and all that therein is. That is the religious description. Science can deal only with material phenomena: religion deals with spiritual realities. The danger is in supposing that the scientific description of the world is the only true description, and being thereby led to a morbid and pessimistic view of the creation.

But once we have grasped the religious description of the world as the product of a divine purpose and the sphere of a divine action we are able to take a brighter view of it: we get back to the Biblical view. The Bible, we remember, is not science, but religion, and it is the religious view of the creation that we find there. There we find God rejoicing in his work. We feel the throb of the divine joy all through the Old Testament. There is a naive simplicity in the Old Testament presentment of God. He glories, quite frankly, in his works. We feel a certain pleasure that he takes in the great whales that he has made, and in Leviathan: a certain excitement in the storm when he

comes flying upon the wings of the wind. A crude anthropomorphism—it is easy to sneer. Yes: anthropomorphism; and why not? Can we understand God otherwise than in the terms of our own nature. No one, I take it, ever got any living, energetic notion of God from scientific and metaphysical definitions of him. Whatever vital notion of God we get, we get when he is defined for us in the terms of our own nature. Metaphysics says that God is without body, parts, or passions: but the Bible, which is not metaphysics, but religion, says that he loves and hates. That is a statement that at any rate we understand. And we are not likely to misunderstand it: we are not at all likely to make the inference that God is a magnified man, notwithstanding all that is said by the fearers of anthropomorphism: the inference that we do actually make is that what God is said to hate should be hateful to us, and what God is said to love should be loved by us.

The inference that we make from the religious description of God's attitude toward the world is that our attitude toward it should be, not a morbid depreciation of it, but a frank joy in it, and pleasurable and temperate use of it. It is God's bounty towards us that we are to receive with thankfulness, and use with reverence.

And first of all we are to find in it—that is the Biblical point of view—the *Divine Presence*. God is in the world and the world reveals his presence. We need to get rid of the prejudice of our education which was in terms of the scientific description of the world, and put ourselves back at the point of view of the religious description of it. The causes we learned about were scientific formulæ: religion knows only one cause—God. The work that is done upon earth, he doeth it himself. He is the reality of the phenomenal world; consequently he is not far from any one of us—"Closer to us than breathing, nearer than hands or feet." The presence of God in the world is not the effect of his action or the working of his power, but the Personal Presence of the Divine Father.

We can rest in that presence in perfect confidence and peace. The phenomena of the world are just the veils that are hung before the presence of God.

From above us and from under,
In the ocean and the thunder,
Thou preludest to the wonder
Of the Paradise to be:
For a moment we may guess Thee
From Thy creatures that confess Thee
When the morn and evening bless Thee,
And Thy smile is on the sea.

Then from something seen or heard,
Whether forests softly stirred,
Or the speaking of a word,
Or the singing of a bird,
Cares and sorrows cease:
For a moment on the soul
Falls the rest that maketh whole,
Falls the endless peace.

O the hush from earth's annoys!
O the heaven, O the joys
Such as priest and singing-boys
Cannot sing or say!
There is no more pain and crying,
There is no more death and dying,
As for sorrow and for sighing,
These shall flee away.

What a difference it makes in the world if we look out upon it as just the veil that separates—that does not really separate—from God. I never get out of the Divine presence: I am never away from the Divine help. I have no sense of distance when I think of God. "God's in his heaven, all's right with the world." No: that is not the truth. God's in his world, and therefore all's right with it. "Thou art with me"—that is the fact. "Thou art about my path and about my bed and spiest out all my ways." It is the thought of the presence of God that gives our prayers their vitality, is it not? I am the "child crying in the night," no doubt: but not with terror, for I am certain that

my voice is heard. I go about my daily duty and I can stop at any time and talk with God. I can face my temptations calmly, because I know that I have only to reach out my hand and it rests in the hand of God. The inexplicable thing about human life is that it should ever be weak when there is this inexhaustible strength to lean on.

How is it that with this certainty in our lives we insist on living so much alone? One would think that loneliness would be impossible for us: that all our life would be consciously rested on God: that I would so surrender my life to God that God would act for me and in me. The life of discipline means that, does it not?—a surrendered life, a life consciously controlled by God? I am powerless apart from God, but with him I can do all things. The consecrated life means that, does it not?—a life that is so united to God that it has come to see the divine purpose, and devotes itself to the accomplishment of it? The devout life means that, does it not?—a life that feels itself in the divine presence, and kneels at God's feet, and draws all its inspiration from him.

Life and the things of life, I said a moment ago, are God's bounty to us: we may use them freely. It is a view of the world that religious persons have found it easy to lose sight of. There early stole into Christian thought from poisoned sources

a view of the world that made it antagonistic to God. Eastern speculation has always been haunted by a feeling of the evil of matter: it thought of spirit as something not only separate from but as antagonistic to matter. It was unable to think of God as in contact with the material world which seemed to it to be the seat of all evil. It dreaded and hated the body as a material thing. Christian thinking was deeply infected with this view: it came to have almost the same dread of matter and distrust of the body that Eastern speculation had. It exaggerated the sinfulness of sins that were specially seated in the flesh. It felt that abuse of the body was the way of escape from the material.

The consequence of all this was a false asceticism: a discipline of the bodily nature whose passions, disordered by sin, need to be brought back into subjection to the will of God. But any theory of the evil of the body ignores the fact of its creation by God, and of its possibilities in his service. The body is good, and all its natural passions are good: it is only their disorder that is evil. It is the duty of the Christian to reverence the body, to maintain it in health and purity. A body that is wilfully disordered or weakened is an unfit servant of its creator: it is incapable of the best service that God has the right to expect from it. The mediæval abuse of the body defeated its own ends

and created the very morbidity that it hoped to overcome.

The heaven and the earth that God created and sustains are to us a source of the knowledge of God. The Bible never argues about God as modern works on the evidences of religion do: but it constantly points us to the visible world as itself the evidence of the existence and character of God. I am not proposing to enter into any evidential argument, but there are one or two points that I wish to bring out in the evidence of the creature to the Creator.

And I would lay especial stress on the beauty of the world as revealing its Creator. The sense of the beautiful is inherent in our nature. We are unable to explain just what it is or to get any complete analysis of it, but it exists in some degree in every man. Who knows why it is that our souls are stirred so deeply by the sight of fields bathed in the golden light of the morning? Who knows why a rose or a lily is a living joy? There are sounds that stir in us depths of emotion that nothing else will reach. There are lines of poetry that find an entrance to our souls by some path before untrodden. The beauty of the creation finds in us something that is akin to it and which understands it.

But the beauty that is in the creation—what is

it but God made visible? God is the supreme beauty and his work reflects him. It is because we are like God, that we are made in his image, that we have a spiritual nature, that we are able to perceive a reflection of God in his works. Again, if you will, we are interpreting God by what we ourselves are. But again, too, that is perfectly legitimate, for the creature has a certain likeness to its creator: any understanding we may have of God must come to us through our likeness to him.

We do well to cultivate this sense of the beautiful, for it is by so doing that we are fitting ourselves for the enjoyment of God. It is very notable that heaven is described to us in terms of beauty, rather than as we might have expected that it would be, in terms of morality or activity. It was the music of heaven that caught the ear of St. John, and the gleam of its gold and jewels that held his eye. These are symbols, no doubt: but the significant thing is that the fact of heaven can best be conveyed under imagery of beauty, just as it is significant that the moments of our greatest spiritual exaltation, when we feel nearest to God, are most often mediated through beauty of form or sound. One is more likely to feel oneself brought into the presence of God, and to be stirred to the adoration of him, and to be stimulated to his service, before the crimson of a sunset or the

note of an organ, than by our spoken exhortation. We mistake utterly if we take such states of exalted feeling as of no significance. They are really states of revelation wherein God speaks to us and wherein we, if we listen, are made certain of the Presence of God.

“A garden is a lovesome thing, God wot!
Rose plot,
Fringed pool,
Ferned grot—
The veriest school
Of peace: and yet the fool
Contends that God is not—
Not God! in gardens! when the eve is cool.”

There is another aspect of the creation that impresses one in a quite different manner with the presence of God in his work. I mean the order that is visible in the world. Order is the evidence of intelligence: an orderly world is a world governed by intelligence. If we were dealing with the evidences for the existence of God from an apologetic point of view we should insist on this order as of supreme importance. And it is of importance, too, from our present point of view of the interpretation of God as the object of our worship.

For what we feel that we need to find in God, if we are to worship him, is a *person*: that is to say, a Being with whom we can have the kind of rela-

tion that we call personal. If by God we meant a force, or an influence, or a cause, we should feel that while we might be subject to him, none of the intimate relations of love or sympathy or service would be possible. They are only possible in relation to a person. We can obey a force but we cannot love it: we can be controlled by an influence but we cannot expect sympathy from it. Now what is essential to our notion of personality is intelligence: if the cause of the world displays intelligence, we are sure of the possibility of a personal relation.

And it is the order of the world that assures us that its cause is personal. By order, I mean that the world can be understood: that we can foresee its action and reckon on its permanency. The conception of nature that science has formulated as uniform, and governed by fixed law is another way of stating this. If nature were governed by chance, we could not count on the permanency of anything: we should have no ground of expectancy of the sunrise to-morrow, or of finding the stars in their orbits night after night.

But nature is orderly, and the power that has created it is therefore intelligent. We count on the permanency of the natural laws, and we may likewise count on the permanency of God's relation to us. He loves us with an everlasting love.

“The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary.” “With him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” Morning by morning as we turn our thoughts to him, he is the same: “his mercies fail not.” Evening by evening as we come to him saddened by the failures of the day, his pardoning love meets us. In him is the ever-present possibility of renewed strength and joy. Life of our life, strength of our strength; he is constant, though we be inconstant. We may lean on him as heavily as we will: “underneath are the everlasting arms.”

THE SIXTH MEDITATION

THE SIXTH MEDITATION

AND IN JESUS

Let us listen to the words of the Angel —

THOU shalt call his name JESUS, for he shall save his people from their sins.

Let us picture —

The scene in the stable at Bethlehem on the first Christmas morning. There are two peasants here, and a new-born child: a very simple scene. But the writer of the Gospel has sketched the picture in a few bold strokes with such realism that it would be one of the imperishable stories of the world even though the interests involved were less tremendous. We have only to shut our eyes to see it again. The inn with its noisy crowd where

there is no room for the latest comers: the sordidness of the stable, yet, perhaps not uncomfortable to those who had known so little of comfort in their lives: the birth of the child and his laying in the manger: and in contrast with this, the world outside. The shepherds abiding in the fields, startled by the shining of the heavenly light and the rush of angelic voices through the star-strewn midnight. The veil between heaven and earth seems drawn aside for the moment, and the two worlds touch visibly, as they always do invisibly. Over in the East there are star-led Magi journeying to find a new-born King. In the background, Herod, symbol of a hostile world, ready to secure his position by the murder of the child that lies unconscious in the manger. And then the wonder that the child whom shepherds visit, and Magi seek, and Herod fears, and Angels worship—this peaceful, sleeping Child—is the mighty God, the Eternal Father, the Prince of Peace, the Saviour of the world. Great is the mystery of Godliness.

Consider, first —

That the purpose of God in the creation is reaching a further and a decisive stage in the birth of this Child. That birth is not an accident, due to sin, but a part of the eternal purpose of God in

the creation. God made man in order that man might know and love God. This purpose might be momentarily defeated by sin, but it could not be permanently frustrated. That God and man should become one through an Incarnation of God was the divine purpose in the creation. The conditions under which the Incarnation took place, no doubt, were determined by sin: that it should be thus humble-wise and in circumstances of poverty and pain, and that man's redemption should cost the death of his Redeemer. So behold God here, emptied of his glory, folding the robe of humanity about him and becoming the child of Mary. Let us adore the love of God in the Incarnation, the love that does not shrink from entering into human misery, and sharing the lowest place with his creatures: the love of God that will seek and save even in the farthest wilderness and among the loneliest mountains, the lost sheep of humanity. Let us look with clear eyes upon this manger and the Child lying there, and make our act of faith in him, acknowledging him our Lord and our God: God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds: and Man, of the substance of his Mother, born in the world. Perfect God, and perfect Man: of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting.

Consider, second —

That the birth of this Child has changed the world for *us*: through it new possibilities are opened for *us*. It is not simply that he brought a new *truth*, a new revelation of the *will* of the Father: but that he brought a new *life* of which we have been made partakers. His stooping was our rising. We have been taken into the incarnate nature of this Child and made partakers of his divine nature. It is not, then, an interesting history that we are studying but a personal relation that we are trying to understand. My salvation is in this Child. I am saved or lost as I abide in him or am separate from him. My personal interest in Bethlehem is, therefore, intense. It is not only that I approach with awe the Incarnate God, but that I approach with passionate love my Saviour. I see in him the greatest revolutionary force that the world has ever known: a force that overturns empires and changes the face of civilizations: I see also the power that has altered my own life, has chosen me to be a Christian, has determined my vocation and brought me to this place. I see the God who has wonderfully intervened in behalf of humanity: I see—and when I see, my heart swells with gratitude—the Saviour who has washed me from my sin in his own Blood, and who, I

trust, will sustain my weakness to the end, and finally receive me to himself in his eternal and everlasting glory.

So let us pray —

That our faith in this Child may never fail us. That we may ever be able to count him as our Saviour—our JESUS.

Almighty God, who hast given us thy only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and to be born of a pure virgin: Grant that we being regenerate, and made thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit: through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the same Spirit ever, one God, world without end.

Merciful and loving God, by whose will and bounty Jesus Christ our Lord humbled himself for this—that he might exalt the whole race of man: and descended to the depths for the purpose of lifting up the lowly: and was born, God-Man, by the Virgin for this cause—that he might restore in man the lost celestial image: grant that thy people may cleave unto thee, that as thou hast redeemed them by thy bounty, they may ever please thee by devoted service. Through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord.

In the heart of Christianity is not a great idea, but a loving person. When philosophic thought has done its utmost, it leaves us with a notion of God that is distant and perplexing: or, if it takes the road of pantheism, is indefinite and illusive. We are crushed beneath the conception of tremendous power, a power that knows no pity, nor sympathy: or we lose ourselves in the hopeless vast of an all-embracing life which neither knows nor can be known. It is the Christian religion that rescues us from this intellectual and spiritual desolation, and reveals God to us as a person. It makes God known to us as one who has clothed himself in our nature that he might share in our experience and reveal to us the manner of human life that is pleasing to him. I emerge from my struggle to grasp the abstract idea "God," to find myself confronted with the concrete fact, "God Incarnate": I come down from the mountain of intellectual contemplation and sit at the feet of Jesus and there learn what God is like, not in the purity of the divine essence, but what he is like for me in the revelation of his will for humanity. I am content with this limited view of God. When Jesus says, "I and my Father are one," I am content with the knowledge of the Father that is implied in the life of Jesus. I am content to rest on his love and his sympathy. The thought of

God striving to better human life: strengthening it in its trials, feeling for its disasters, forgiving its iniquities, healing its infirmities and guiding its aspiration and endeavours, is the thought of God that I find helpful in life and adequate to life's needs. I do not deny anything that the philosophers and theologians tell me about God "in himself": but practically I am content with "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the fact of Jesus Christ."

My needs are met by the revelation that is enfolded in his human Name—JESUS: for whatever other things are dim to me, I am quite certain that I need a Saviour. I am quite sure that my natural life is weak and sin-defiled; I am quite certain that of itself it can never rise to be a life that can satisfy any divine ideal of what a human life ought to be, for it is quite impossible for it to satisfy my own low human ideal. Jesus' revelation of himself as Saviour, therefore, is a revelation of hope and joy. It defines God's attitude toward me as one of seeking and hoping love. God has never despaired of me, however I may at times have been tempted to despair of myself. God has expectations of me, and makes demands upon me. I am content and glad that that should be so, because those hopes and demands ensure God's personal interest in me, and when I study them I find that

God does not expect me to do anything alone, but the meaning of Jesus is that he will save: that he will so work with me and in me that the result will be that I shall be able to realize God's hopes for me, and justify his interest in me, and by his love and favor attain to salvation.

This is remote — astonishingly remote — from much that one finds expressed in modern thought on the relation of God to man. Modern thought wants to know what God is "in himself": it is not at all content to know what, in Jesus, he has revealed himself to be. Modern thought revolts before all at the thought that man needs salvation, at the implication of sin. We have been told that there is nothing that the modern man is less troubled about than the thought of his sin. Modern thought about sin is dominated by the evolutionary philosophy of the universe. The universe is a process of becoming and in that process there are many incidental defects: but as the process advances the defects will be overcome. It is so in the evolution of the human race. In our uprising from the lower animals, much of the animal nature still clings to us. As individuals and as society we are doubtless imperfect. Let us acknowledge the imperfection and strive to correct it: but let us recognize it as imperfection and not reproach it as sin. Let us strive, by all means, to better our-

selves: but we shall more hopefully do this by action than by penitence. Salvation will come through truer knowledge and sincerer action.

With much of which one may well agree—but with reservations. One has to point out that while the universe may be progressing toward perfection, it may be, and often is, the fate of the individual or species to deteriorate and perish. The path of progress is strewn with wrecks. These are the unfit, that were unable to correspond with the demands that life made upon them. And when you concentrate attention upon human progress, the phenomena of unfitness and loss become portentous. They too, these degraded and perishing human beings, were unable to meet the demands that life made upon them. But was their inability of the essence of the matter, or was it because of the lack of something that might have been supplied? Was it due simply to outside pressure, or was it due to ignorance and self-will? Might not a different attitude toward life have resulted in a different fate in life?

There can be no doubt that the last statement is in accord with the facts. Whether the human being rises or falls in character—to leave other things out of account—depends upon his conformity with that which is right—a right that he knows or may know. We all agree that lack of

conformity with right has disastrous results: we Christians call the moral disaster that ensues when one refuses to conform one's life to the demands of right, not misfortune or imperfection, but sin. It is sin to disregard, with open eyes, what we know to be right. It is sin, because we are not compelled to our action by the blind operation of evolutionary forces, but we choose our action because we want it.

It is possible that the winnowing process of evolution might in the end produce a higher type of average life than we at present see. But God has not left us to this slow process, because among other things, the individual who may fall by the wayside is important to him. He desires not that any should perish. It is God's care for the individual that explains his saving action upon the individual that the evolutionary process disregards. Our Lord comes bringing salvation, and we may look upon this coming of salvation as a supplementary effort of God. The process of human history continues to unfold itself: there is the same struggle with the same temptations. There is the same possibility of open-eyed violation of law and of consequent moral disaster. But the human case has become more hopeful through the introduction of new factors. Henceforth there lies within the reach of each one the means of counteracting the

effects of deficient knowledge and imperfect willing. God unites his strength to the strength of man. God is not compulsive will directing from the outside: he is efficient co-operation within our nature.

Salvation does not mean an arbitrary act on the part of God. The salvation that is in Christ is open to every one, but is attainable only on condition of appropriate action. There is no favouritism with God. That is a thoroughly false view of the Christian religion that assumes that because salvation is the free gift of God we have nothing to do in the attainment of it. Jesus saves those who are interested in their salvation. He will save the whole race, if the race will interest themselves in the appropriation of his work.

For salvation is the result of the identification of ourselves with Christ and his work. This identification has as its result the improvement of life—what we call righteousness. The roses that deck our gardens are the result of the co-operation of the gardener with nature. Nature by herself would never have produced those gorgeous blooms: neither would the gardener. There is no likelihood that the forces of “nature” would, by any however extended process of evolutions, have produced the flowers of sanctity on the natural growth of unregenerate nature. But the Divine Gardener

produces them when he grafts the wild growth into himself. He confers on it powers and gives it to guidance which "by nature it could not have." But what he produces is a real change in human nature. God does not, by some sort of pious fiction, for the sake of the life and death of his Son, consent to regard sinners as though they were not sinners—he does not cover them with the cloak of his own righteousness: but he confers upon them the grace whereby they may themselves become actually righteous. Our salvation, therefore, is not the arbitrary act of God, removing us from the number of those whom he counts sinners and receiving us as righteous because of our acceptance of Christ: rather our acceptance of Christ and incorporation in him has the result of removing us from the number of sinners so that we become righteous in a real sense of the term.

The essential thing, therefore, to use theological language, is that we should pass from a state of nature into a state of grace: that we should pass from a state of separation from God to one of union with him. This distinction, we are sometimes told, implies a wrong conception of God and of his relation to his creatures. But I think not, if we will be at pains to understand what it means. However we may account for it, sin is a *fact*. Without religion we are, as a matter of fact, sep-

arate from God: and there is nothing in modern knowledge to prevent us from regarding this as an hereditary fact. It is the function of religion to bring us back to God. What people are inclined to resent in this presentation of religion is the supposed implication that, because we are sinners and largely without fault of our own, we are hateful to God. One would have supposed that the most superficial study of Christianity would have silenced that objection. Where in Christianity is God presented as hating mankind? He is presented as hating sin: but his hatred of sin is just because of the disastrous effect of sin on man. His whole revealed work is inspired by love of man—that love that finds its ultimate manifestations in the life and death of Jesus. If God had hated man he would have left him in his sin: but instead, God submits to the shame and death of the Cross out of love for his creature.

I am not now going to discuss what limitation in the power or will of God is implied in the method by which he has chosen to bring salvation. I am concerned simply with the fact of the salvation itself: that it was provided through the Incarnation of the Son of God. I want to fix your thought on the human side rather than on the divine side, and to look at the fact of salvation in some of its less obvious aspects.

Our Lord, in bringing us salvation, made God known to us. But we had known God before? Certainly. The Old Testament, in particular, had told us much about God. But the Old Testament made God known rather in promise than in fulfilment. We are apt to lose the preparatory character of the Old Testament. If you will try to think of the revelation of God as closing with the book of Malachi you will at once see that in that case there would have been no expansion of the Jewish religion, and we should long ago have thrown away the volume as the record of preposterous promises and unrealised dreams. We only believe the Old Testament because the revelation of God did not close with it, but went on to fulfil the promises and to actualise the dreams. We are right, therefore, in saying that our Lord made God known: made him known as the Fulfiller of his promise. I feel that we may sum the revelation up by saying that it was a revelation of God as interested in human life, and through that interest he revealed human life as a life of infinite possibilities of advance because he showed that it was capable of union with himself. We may say, therefore, that the revelation of God to man involved a revelation of man to himself. Man, no doubt, believed in himself as a creature of eternal destiny. He assumed his own immortality, and that therefore his importance was

a more than earthly importance. But he had not understood his possible relation to God, and his capacity for union with God. In the light of that capacity I become quite a different creature in my own eyes. My future is illumined. It is no longer a future of dim and scarcely human existence in a shadowy Sheol, or of idle and joyous wanderings in Elysian fields, but a future of the enjoyment of God himself made possible through his participation in my nature.

But it is a future that I must realize through my own activities. My relation to God must imply a growth in me. It is not that God possesses me, or that I possess God; but that I possess God in so far as I cultivate the divine life imparted to me. It is not a promise that one day I shall see God, or be like God, or even be in God: but that I am present now in God, and that the permanency or the transitoriness of this union depends upon the way in which I use my life in relation to God. The salvation is an actual fact; that is, I have been incorporated in Christ: the sanctification upon which depends the permanency of the union is a potential fact whose realisation depends upon my conduct.

It remains, therefore, that we consider some of the signs by which we may estimate the permanency of the state of salvation in which we have been placed.

I take it that one of the signs to be looked for is the extent of our interest in our "eternal life." Eternal life is a present possession. If we are "saved" and "in Christ," we are in a relation to God that is enduring, if we will have it so. The point is, How much are we interested in this relation and the activities that flow from it? It is obvious that a relation to God cannot be fruitless: it must result in certain activities. Those activities are what we call spiritual activities and must result in the deepening of our appreciation of spiritual things. Our outlook becomes broader than this world. We are intimately concerned in the development of what I may call the stable qualities; that is, the qualities that will survive death and persist in the coming life. There are certain qualities that obviously have reference to this life. I am not saying that they are without value, but only that they are temporary. I am not saying that we ought not to cultivate them, but only that we ought to cultivate something else. The ideal of the good man upon which so much stress is laid to-day, is an admirable ideal as far as it goes, but it needs supplementing by the ideal of the righteous man. The ideal of the righteous man contains all that the ideal of the good man contains, and much more. The good man performs his duty towards his neighbour:

the righteous man does that; but he also performs his duty towards God.

The righteous man looks forward to the state beyond death with interest. He has not simply a vague belief or hope that in some sense he will survive death; he is certain of survival: and in his coming state he expects that certain of his powers will be freed and enlarged. His power of knowledge, for instance, will have a tremendously increased scope. His power of love will find itself unfettered. What he knows now as the love of our Lord—how intense that will be when he is brought into his very presence. The joy of friendship—how that will be increased when we are permitted to choose our friends among the company of heaven. Prayer, which to so many of us is a difficult discipline, will become an active and joyous communion with God.

There is a certain quality of the human mind that is called the constructive imagination. It has proved itself immensely useful in the progress of knowledge. The man of science uses it continually. On the basis of the, often meager, data at his disposal, he constructs an hypothesis which will explain some department of experience that is as yet unexplained. He then proceeds to act as though his hypothesis were true: he applies it to the explanation of the department of experience that he is

studying. If it turns out that the hypothesis works when so applied, that it actually explains what he imagined that it would, he has added to the sum of human knowledge. This is the almost invariable process by which advance in knowledge is achieved. Such postulates as the law of gravitation, and the doctrine of evolution are the outcome of the application of the constructive imagination. The poet creates a character in much the same way, and when he has created it, we say that it is convincing: that is, it is justified by human experience.

There is constant need of this quality in the religious life. It is the constructive imagination, starting from the facts of revelation, that builds up the hypotheses of faith. We trust ourselves to them and we find them justified in life. We know that the life that assumes that spiritual activity will be justified by its results does indeed find that to be the fact. It does find that such activity leads to the knowledge and the love of God. We come to know God in experience only after we have assumed that he can be known and have acted in the appropriate way. But one who waits to have it demonstrated that the Christian may have intimate communion with the living Jesus, and declines to act without the demonstration, will never reach the dreamed of end. We pass through experiment to experience. But the experience when once it is

attained, is a personal experience and cannot be shared. Each must attain the experience for himself.

It is thus that the experience of salvation is attained. Jesus has saved us. He saved mankind: yes, we assent to that as a datum of religion. But has he saved me? I can, of course, say to myself I have the external marks of salvation. I believe and have been baptised. I am in the communion of the Catholic Church. But we really are unsatisfied with the external evidence: we crave subjective assurance. And that is won by experiment, by confiding our lives to Jesus, by throwing on him the burden of our cares and sufferings, by laying at his feet our joys and aspirations, by sharing our hopes and fears with him in our prayers. Out of that experiment there does come a personal knowledge of Jesus and a personal communion with him. After he has answered our prayers, and borne our sorrows, and made himself manifest in our communions, we have passed to a state of inner personal certainty. We have experienced the joy that no man taketh from us. Salvation has now come to mean to us infinitely more than the fact of safety. It has come to mean a state of life in which we are in intimate communion with Jesus, and in which we find the fruitage of the spiritual qualities which we distrusted because we never committed ourselves to them.

It is not true to say, as some have said, that this appreciation of the salvation that is in Jesus has a disastrous reaction upon this life. It has often been charged that concentration on the spiritual interests of life tends to withdraw us from the performance of its more immediate and practical duties. Christians who have attained to the spiritual communion are given to underrating the life that now is. I do not believe that that is true. The duties of life remain to them duties: indeed they come to them with a new appreciation. The duties of our earthly life are the sphere of our service of Jesus. They are not things imposed by society, but they are a part of our vocation. It is among them that Jesus has called us; he has placed us there that he might find us there. We have not gone to heaven to find him, but he has come to this world to find us. All the duties of our present life, however commonplace they may be, are duties to him.

When we have gained a personal experience of Jesus as our Saviour, the wish of our hearts will be for deeper and more constant communion with him. Our acts of worship will gain in fervency as they are realized as means of approach to him, and through him to the Father. The Eucharist, in particular, becomes dear to us, not now from the wide point of view, in that by our participation in it we are enabled to join ourselves to the sacrifice of our

Lord, and offer ourselves in him to the Father. But by it we are enabled to put our lives within his sacrifice, and feel that there they have become a part of his ceaseless offering for mankind.

But it is above all in our communions that we find Jesus. Through them he comes into our souls to dwell in them. There are cold souls that stand without and question—"How can this man give us his flesh to eat " But there are other souls that are kindled with love of him, and they, without asking how or why, come to him and find him. Their experience is that Jesus is with them. One is not anxious to analyse the fact of love when one possesses the object of one's love: it is enough that the love exists. So it is enough for us that in our communions we do find him whom our soul loveth: that we experience the joy of his presence; that we know ourselves safe within his arms. To one who really finds Jesus in his communions, how insufferable are all the endless controversies about his presence. We know that we find him, and that is enough. We know that he comes to the altar, expectant of us, and we hasten to meet him there. All questioning becomes puerile and inconceivable in the face of the fact that he makes himself known to us in the breaking of Bread.

Let us carry this thought of the meeting of Jesus out to one more application of it. Wherever are

the consecrated elements, and for whatever purpose, there is Jesus. He reposes in the Tabernacle of the Reservation. On some favored altars of the Church he condescends to be ever present. No doubt, on his part, he longs to be present on more. This is the crowning privilege of the Christian Church, that it may have its Saviour ever with it. This is the crowning joy of the Christian, that at any time he may pass into the immediate presence of his Saviour. Again, do not let us be afraid of theories: let us just hold to the fact that when we kneel before the tabernacle we are in the immediate presence of Jesus. It is merely stupid to let that wonderful fact be hidden to us by dread of supposed consequences, by foolish talk about superstition, and carnal views of the Eucharist. The thing I want to know, and the thing I do know, is that when I kneel before the Blessed Sacrament I am in the Presence of my Lord and Saviour. I can bring my weariness and my passionate desires there to him, and he hears me. When I need, I can get away from the world and be alone with my Saviour. Just as in my participation in the public Eucharistic worship of the Church I realise my membership in the Christian Brotherhood, and feel myself one with the Holy Church throughout all the world in its adoration of the Divine Mystery, lifting up my heart and giving thanks with angels and archangels,

in the universal worship of the Creator through the One Mediator, Christ Jesus. Just as in my communion I find myself united to the Divine Humanity of the Incarnate Son of God, and through that union made one with all that are in him: so in my approach to Jesus in the Tabernacle I am conscious of the door that is open in heaven through him by which I may at any time approach the Divine Presence, and find the satisfaction of my most intimate and personal needs. It is well to remember the corporate relations of life and one's union with others in the one Body: but there are moments when one's separate personality asserts itself, when the soul feels the need of lonely intercourse with its Saviour: when one would shut out all else and be alone with him: when one would clasp his feet in the violence of one's personal needs, when one would lay one's head upon his breast for comfort, when one would cry to him in one's agony for his gift of pardon and peace. It is then that the Reserved Sacrament means so much to one as the ever-ready resort of the solitary soul to its Saviour.

THE SEVENTH MEDITATION

THE SEVENTH MEDITATION

CHRIST

Let us listen to the words of the Eunuch —

I PRAY thee, of whom speaketh the Prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?

Let us picture —

The Ethiopian Eunuch in his chariot, reading the book of Isaiah. He had come to Jerusalem from a far land to worship his God; and now, his mission accomplished, he is returning home. A long and weary journey lies before him, but it will not be tedious: he will employ himself with the study of the word of God. His interest in that word has no doubt been freshly stimulated by his worship at

Jerusalem: perhaps he had never been there before and its historic scenes were new to him. Now he is reading in the book of Isaiah, "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter." What perplexing words: how can he tell what they mean? To him comes St. Philip, fresh from his preaching in Samaria. Perhaps St. Philip had thought it strange that he should be taken away from a successful mission and bidden to go the way from Jerusalem to Gaza "which is desert." Why leave one's work to go into the loneliness of a desert way? But God has work to be done in all ways. The Evangelist breaks in on the Eunuch's reading: Understandest thou what thou readest? See St. Philip in the chariot, explaining the Scriptures. What a wonderfully open mind was that of the Eunuch, that he was ready to take up a passing stranger and be taught of him. What a wonderful lesson that must have been, as the chariot rolled southward from Jerusalem toward Gaza. "Philip opened his mouth and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus." One can find Jesus anywhere in the Scriptures. One can teach Jesus anywhere on the road. Try and see the picture at the close, when the chariot stops, "and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch: and he baptised him." And the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, his mission accomplished and the mys-

tery of the desert road explained. And the Eunuch went on his way rejoicing. They probably never met again in this life. Imagine the meeting in Paradise.

Consider, first —

What an incomplete book the Old Testament must have seemed to the Jew. This pious man, pondering its pages, ends in perplexity. "Of whom speaketh the Prophet this?" Such tangled pages as there are there. Such promises that seemed to light up the life of Israel as with streaming sunlight. But in reality the life of Israel has dwindled down to the poor, mean, self-seeking thing it was when the Romans came and took away its place and nation. Such a revelation of God as was there; of God choosing Israel to be his own Son: and then the reality of Israel scattered to the four winds of heaven: its land lost, its children coming up from far lands to worship at Jerusalem. Such hopes as are set before the nation of prosperity and dominion: and the pitiful reality that the Eunuch would find at Jerusalem, ready to perish through the petty jealousies and intrigues of its parties. What visions of the future there were in the pages of this same Isaiah: but it is centuries since they were dreamed, and to-day one could hardly hold any faith in them, or expectation of a waking

reality. Yet men, with indestructible faith, continued to take up this volume, with its preposterous promises, and vanished dreams, and turn its pages with hope that the light would still break through.

Consider, second —

We still turn the pages, but with what different feelings. The morning has come. We no longer ask doubting questions, "Of whom speaketh the Prophet this?" for a light has fallen upon the pages—a light from a life that has realized all the promises and actualised all the dreams. The figure so dimly adumbrated in the pages of Prophet and Psalmist stands revealed to our eyes—the figure of the Christ that they with spiritual sight illumined by the Holy Ghost saw, and tried to express through these words, that other men might see. To us, that word, Christ, binds the past and the present, makes of the Old and New Testaments one Book: a book of which the central purpose is to reveal God to man and restore men to God. Through the pages of that book there moves a figure that gives it its unity—the figure that is always God seeking the salvation of men: that is not more clearly God when speaking amid the thunders of Sinai, than when he walks by the Sea of Galilee, or speaks from the Mount of the Beatitudes, or stands by the open grave of Lazarus. "To him give

all the prophets witness," whether they saw him as the Son of David once more establishing the fallen throne of his Father: or as the pathetic and lonely Sufferer for the sins of his people. Wherever you turn your face in the Scriptures, you see the face of the coming Christ.

Let us then pray —

For grace to understand the Word of God. For the open heart which keeps its door ajar for him to enter. Let us pray for the seeking spirit of the Ethiopian.

Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of the holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

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One sometimes fancies that when we say the Creed we fail to attach any very definite meaning to our Lord's title of Christ: that we pass it over as though it were a surname appended to our Lord's human name, Jesus, as indeed it sounds to be in English. Or, if we reflect that that is not the case, still we do not attach much importance to a mere Jewish title the meaning of which is transcended

in the meaning that we attach to our Lord and his mission.

That is an unfortunate way of looking at the matter. Much is to be learned both of the method of God and the meaning of our Lord's mission from a study of the Messianic idea. That idea is the chief connecting link between the Old and the New Testaments: that which more than anything else justifies us in regarding them as the narrative of a single action, the fulfilment of a continuous purpose of God. It makes good our contention that the Old Testament is a revelation of God, and vindicates its claim to the possession of prophetic vision. The New Testament claim that our Lord is the Messiah of the Old Testament asserts that he is the fulfilment of the prophecies and the accomplishment of the promises. To our Lord's contemporaries the central interest of his mission was not whether he were God made man, but whether he were the promised Messiah who should vindicate Israel's right to be considered the chosen nation, the people of God. What was uppermost in the mind of those who thought about him at all was whether he were the Christ or no.

The idea of a Messiah who should come in the vindicator of God's ways with Israel was one of slow growth: and it is one of the best and most helpful results of modern criticism of the Old Tes-

tament that we are able to-day to trace the stages of that growth, and note the gradually increasing content of that idea as it unfolds in the minds of Israel's inspired teachers. The starting point is found in the conviction that Israel is God's people, and the medium through which his eternal purpose is being worked out. In Israel's earliest writings this conviction is present as the meaning of the nation's life. Israel conceives its life as different from the life of other nations. And when you ask the reason of the difference, you find that it consists in this: (1) That Israel's God differs from the gods of the nations in that he is a Holy God and expects holiness in his people: and (2) That he is the God of the whole earth with a future purpose as wide as the earth: and (3) That this purpose is to be worked out through his people. The peculiarity therefore of Israel's position is that it is the medium of God's revelation and the instrument of his purpose.

This sense of purpose in its own life is perhaps the most remarkable thing in the history of Israel. There is no other nation in history, I think, of which such a thing can be affirmed. And when you try to appreciate the naked facts of the history of Israel as one among the nations of the world the extraordinary nature of this belief becomes plain. From the secular point of view the history of Israel

is insignificant. Occupying a narrow strip of land in Eastern Asia which nothing but the most optimistic patriotism could ever have regarded as even passably endowed with natural advantages, it had almost nothing on which to support a broad national life. Its people lacked the aptitudes that enabled its northern neighbour, Phoenecia, to create a commercial empire. Politically, it was always in a state of unstable equilibrium. Huge empires on the east and south continually threatened to absorb it. Save for two brief periods, when the weakness of its neighbours coinciding with the reigns of the Israelite kings of marked ability gave it the opportunity of a momentary expansion, it was politically insignificant. There was little enough, one would think, at any period in its career, upon which to base a national idealism. And yet that idealism was the most striking feature of its life. As interpreted by the thought of its intellectual and spiritual leaders, Israel lived a life of continual expectancy. It resolutely turned its eyes away from present misfortunes and disasters and fixed them on the future where it saw, as through a golden mist, the vision of an Israel which should be the very embodiment of the mind of God for the guidance of human life. And if it thought of the future with a consciousness of mission that no other nation has ever displayed, it thought of its past and its present with a severity

of self-judgment which is equally unique in human history. It judged itself with utter candour. It was deeply convinced that its failure to realise the ideal national life was the outcome of its own infidelity to its vocation.

There is something infinitely pathetic in this consciousness of a vocation to represent God in the world coupled with this conviction of repeated failure to do so. One would think that under the pressure of actuality the sense of vocation would have died. But not at all: it rose superior to all national disaster: it glowed the brighter through the darkness of its seemingly irremediable failure. Over the sickening disaster of the fall of Jerusalem, amid the crash of walls and the smoke of the final conflagration, the voice of prophecy rose with sublime security telling of a renewed Jerusalem and a faithful king.

At the heart of this inextinguishable hope lies, I repeat, Israel's sense of vocation: it is the instrument of the purpose of God and, therefore, cannot fail. And this purpose of God becomes in time, in the thought of Israel's prophets, identified with its *kingship*. It is not only Israel as a nation that is the chosen of God, but the vocation centres, as it were, in its royal line, the House of David. The king, in a special way, is the representative of God. Ideally, he is the embodiment of the righteous rule

of God: he is to carry out God's thought in the government of man. As each successive king comes to the throne we can imagine him studied by the faithful in Israel as a possible embodiment of the divine thought, and the sense of hope deferred when he is discovered to be like the others, and to deserve the monotonous sentence: He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. Yet the failure of the present only served to emphasise the promise of the future: a king must rise to reign in righteousness, if not this then some other king. As the darkness grows deeper, and the national life sinks lower, the vision becomes clearer: deliverance will come through a person — a true king after God's own heart.

But the kingship itself passes from Israel. Men still continue to look for a new king and a renewed kingdom: but in the thought of prophets and psalmists a change passes over the future. A new figure emerges, with vague outlines, but with no uncertain content. It is the figure of a prophetic teacher. It had been characteristic of Israel's thought of itself that it was not only called of God to a vocation which would one day be realised through a righteous king: but that its religious life was continually guided by men whose mission it was to speak to it in the name of God. These teachers it was, indeed, that kept alive Israel's sense of its vocation. Its

very vocation was prophetic. The truth of God that had been committed to Israel was theirs as a trust: one day it would go out from them to transform the world. So their vision of the future came to shape itself about the conception of a prophet-nation of which the function seems at times to be incarnate in the figure of one transcendent prophet. And the prophet-nation or the transcendent prophet, so the vision fluctuates, will be able to execute his mission of enlightenment only through *suffering*. Israel reads aright its own history and the history of humanity. It is only through suffering that truth is proclaimed or assimilated.

There is one more element in this prophetic vision. Israel's conviction of its own failure to answer to the demands of God upon it was profound. It deeply felt that it was a sinful nation. Surely then the fulfilment of the promise would involve, nay, necessitate, dealing with sin. There was need of priest and sacrifice. The promised cleansing must be mediated. So the thought of the priest who, like king and prophet, should be the representative of God to Israel, and yet should grow out of Israel's own life, came to take its place in the Messianic vision.

Thus it was that by brooding over the problems of its national life and the relation of God to that life that the conviction grew up that the future of

Israel would be shaped by One who should embody the separate guiding elements in that life—One who should be Prophet, Priest and King. I have presented the matter thus in detachment from individual prophecies because we cannot always be sure of the detailed application of them. But we are sure of this, which is more important than the meaning of separate passages in the Old Testament, that the whole life of Israel has a forward look. It recognizes its own incompleteness and relies on the future for its completion. It is perfectly sure of its vocation, and that present failure will not prevent the realisation of the purpose of God. That stands sure: and it is sure, too, that when the purpose of God is unfolded it will be through One who will gather up in himself all the meaning of Israel's past: who will be perfectly what Israel was called to be and has so lamentably failed to be, God's Son. And being that, he will also be the King of the line of David who shall be after God's heart: the prophet suffering for his people: the priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. All this was summed up in the title given him, the Messiah, the Christ.

When we turn to the pages of the New Testament and the life of our Lord as it is presented there, the thing that is plain to us is that our Lord assumes to occupy toward the life of his people this

character that is marked out for the Messiah in the prophetic life of Israel. He is not much concerned in his ministry with the effect of his ministry on the world. He is sent to the lost sheep of the House of Israel, and he declines to be turned away from that mission. His endeavour is to be accepted as the Messiah, the Christ. His pretention is to be the Prophet, Priest and King for whom Israel is looking. We are not concerned here with the degree or nature of his success. What concerns us is the Messianic character itself, and the way in which our Lord vindicated his claim to it.

The mission of the prophet is to make known the mind of God. We cannot find out the mind of God for ourselves: we can only know it as it is revealed to us. The mind of God was gradually made known through the inspired teachers of the Old Testament. But it was not made known in its completeness, that is, its completeness for our needs and for God's purposes for us, until it was made known by our Lord. It is not so much our Lord's words that make known the mind of God, as himself. He is the revelation of God: when we study him we learn as much of God as we can know. "No man hath seen God at any time: the Only Begotten Son that is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."

But the revelation that is in Christ is not some

new revelation by which the revelation that is in the Old Testament is set aside: it is the continuance of the same revelation. There is one purpose of God running through all history: and that purpose is to save man by Christ. In Christ the purpose is made clear, because in him God is made known.

To us, then, Christ is the Revealer of the ways of God: those dark, winding ways, as men think they are as they tread them, run out into the sunny meadows of God's love. We may be uncertain of many things: but we can never be uncertain of that love when once we have looked into the face of Christ. All God's love and mercy and pitifulness are there. It was this that lured men and enticed them. Those who had an ideal of the Christ hidden in their souls, when they had been near him for any time, when they had heard his voice and looked into his eyes, recognised him. "This is he of whom Moses and the prophets wrote," they told their friends. "Come and see a man that told me all the things that ever I did," they wondered. "Thou art the Christ," they confessed. That was his claim, too, when he was adjured by the high priest, "Tell us whether thou be the Christ?" Jesus said unto him, "Thou hast said."

As we study our Lord's life, then, what we are learning is the way in which God looks upon human life. So many of us grow up with a dread of God:

there seems a chilling distance between him and us. The watchful eye, that to us represents his Providence, seems seeking our inmost thoughts for the hidden sins that lurk there. We fear that he will find there sins that we ourselves have not discovered. We live in an atmosphere of dread about ourselves. I do not wish to underrate sin: but that is certainly not God's attitude toward it, for it is not Christ's. If he looks upon the hidden sin it is that he may lead us to confess it: and even in our pitiful inability to confess it, he says: "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." The attitude toward himself that he tries to elicit from us is that of trustful confidence. The Father, in him, shows as one to whom we may confide our lives. "He that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." No one shrank from him: he drew out the best in every nature.

But, on the other hand, he expected that men should live up to that best. It happened that he inspired in men an optimism about themselves that was not well founded: that could not stand the test of execution: and in that case he revealed them to themselves by the demand that they act upon their professions. He never hesitated to apply such tests. And it was best for men that they should learn to distinguish between a superficial enthusiasm and the entire devotion of their lives. That was a pathetic collapse of profession that was, no doubt,

perfectly sincere, in the Young Ruler who went away sorrowful because he had great possessions which were more to him than our Lord. That was a stern test of devotion when he said, "Let the dead bury their dead." That was a high standard that he applied, "No man having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God." That was a very striking scene, when the sons of Zebedee came with their request to sit, the one on his right hand and the other on his left, in his kingdom. "Can you drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with?" he asks. And when they profess their ability, he gives them the cup and the baptism, but not the seat. So he tests those who would come near him.

The thought of God that we gather, then, is that of One who will be long-suffering and patient with our weakness: who will forgive the sin that is brought to him: but who also will test our professions of allegiance to the uttermost. There are moments of enthusiasm in our lives when we seem to ourselves to have given ourselves to God without reserve: when we say, "Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." These are moments of solemn dedication when we deliberately offer our lives to God: when we see clearly that the worth of life is its worth to him, and it seems

to us a small thing to give all to him in a holy life. We seem to have caught the meaning of the words "He that loseth his life shall save it." And then the tide ebbs, and leaves us stranded on a barren shore. There come cold, grey hours when we front the sacrifice that we are making with bitter searching of heart. It seems to us quite impossible that we should keep to the resolution that we had made. We find that it involves a severity of discipline, a sacrifice of the will, an abandonment of self, that we had not imagined. The process of selling all that we have is a painful process. You here in the convent know something of that: and that it is not a sale once for all, as you fondly thought, but a daily parting with prized possessions. But allegiance must be more than facile words: and if we had only words on our lips, and not eager love in our hearts—love that was more than the love of any earthly thing—we must know that too.

The priesthood of the Messiah was a thing just hinted at in the Old Testament: but in our Lord's unfolding of the Messianic Mission it assumes quite other proportions. It is the function of the priest to reconcile man to God, and our Lord's work is presented to us as pre-eminently a work of reconciliation. The Godward effect of his Incarnate work is something that we are unable to fathom: but it certainly is not properly described as the

pacification of an angry God. On the manward side we know that work as the bringing man back to God. Through our union with him we are admitted into union with the Father. He offers himself, the one true and perfect sacrifice, and, in him, we partake of the results of that sacrifice.

To us, then, the Christ is the way of approach to God. "I am the door," he says of himself. It is one of the constant joys of our religion that the way of God is constantly open. I could not know this without the revelation of God made through the Son. It is the Incarnation that makes me feel the nearness of God and his readiness to receive me. And even with the Incarnation and our acceptance of its theological meaning, we are all too prone to fail in trust toward God: we are ever full of doubts and hesitations and suspicions in committing our lives to him. We act as though there were some doubt about the door being open, as though Christ's sacrifice did not actually include us, as though we needed something else to plead beside that—some merit or achievement of our own.

I have found in practical dealing with souls that failure in hope and trust is one of the common failures of even those who are well along in the spiritual life. We find it hard to face the future, especially, in just simple trust in the sacrifice of our Lord as the sufficient guarantee that all will be

well with us. One of our common weaknesses is that we want to see too far ahead. Our Lord's "Take no thought for the morrow" seems an impractical rule of life. How can we help looking and planning ahead? Looking and planning our lives as best we may—no doubt that is wise: but the constant anxiety as to how the future is to turn out—that is not wise. I think that one who is careful to submit all his life to God in simple trust in him will have found over and over again in his experience, that the trouble that he borrowed and the anxiety he felt were, in the event, proved foolish and unnecessary. God rules and shapes our lives; and though we may not see how the path runs in the far distance we always see enough of the path to walk in now: and when the dreaded day breaks on which we had spent so much anxious care there is a sun that lights it and our cares prove to have been foolishness. God makes our way known to us when it is time for us to know it. We need not be anxious about what is going to happen in the future: we need only to keep our lives as in God's Presence. When we have learned how to join those lives to the life of our Lord and make them part of his priestly offering which he presents before the throne of the Father, we shall have learned to want to know less about the future, and be content with our union with Christ now as con-

taining in itself all the pledge of the future that we need.

The Kingship of the Messiah was that side of his work that impressed itself most deeply on the minds of the writers of the Old Testament. It was that that Israel looked forward to as the cause of its national vocation and the meaning of its life. The Messiah was to realise on earth the perfect rule of God—that rule that Israel's kings had so strikingly failed to manifest. The coming age was to be the time of Messianic reign—a true and perfect kingdom of God.

There is no more pathetic instance of man's failure to read aright the thought of God than the conception of King Messiah and his kingdom which developed in the mind of Israel. Israel was unable to read God's care of them and his work through them in other terms than those of divine favouritism. The Messiah's rule meant to them the temporal and material triumph of Israel as a worldly kingdom. The homage of the nations to King Messiah was translated to mean the bringing of temporal wealth and power to Israel. It could not but be a rude shock when our Lord proclaimed his Messiahship on quite different lines: My kingdom is not of this world. An expansion of the truths contained in Israel's religion and their triumph over

the souls of men was not at all what Israel had expected, or, indeed, wanted.

Yet that, it turned out, was the meaning of Messiah's universal reign. Our Lord, indeed, came as a King and proclaimed a kingdom, but citizenship in that kingdom was open to all men of good will. The nationalistic hopes of later Judaism vanished, and the disillusionment was bitter. Yet it need not have been: that is a wider reign than any temporal kingdom could have attained. The Messiah rules to-day with a rule as wide as the rule of God. It is through him that God manifests himself to men.

The claim of our Lord to be king is, perhaps, of all his claims the hardest for men to recognise, for it involves the practical abandonment of their lives to him. It requires the submission of our thoughts and conduct: it requires the acceptance of an external standard to which they are to be referred. To live from day to day in submission to the will of another is not an easy thing. The favourite ground of revolt is the mental—against the thought that the rule of Messiah should manifest itself in the assertion of final truth: that the Christian religion should be a dogmatic religion. But although that is the objection that is commonest on men's lips, it is not, as matter of fact, what they find most objectionable. The real revolt is a revolt against Christianity as imposing a certain ideal of

conduct. Those who are most submissive to dogmatic truth, experience in their lives the difficulty of holding to the type of conduct that Christianity requires. Large sections of society to-day are in open revolt against the ideals of conduct that are embodied in the Christ-life. His meekness, his humility, his purity, his peaceableness, his denunciation of materialism and self-seeking, his commendation of sacrifice and self-denial, when they are proposed as the ideals of conduct to men of the twentieth century, are received with impatience or disregarded as impracticable mysticism. We read much of the crisis of faith in these days: but the crisis of faith is much less intense than the crisis of loyalty. There are plenty who are willing to say, Lord, Lord: not so many who seek to do the will of the Father.

We experience this in the moral struggle of our own lives. It is difficult to keep to a high standard, especially when that standard is not endorsed by our neighbours. As society drifts away in revolt from the ideals of the Gospel, it becomes increasingly difficult for us to stand up against it. Yet to live simply in the light of the life of Jesus is the effective way in which we testify to his kingship. The world's protest against strictness should only lead to greater carefulness of life on our part. If the Christ is my King, I must be careful not to

lapse into the Jewish attitude toward the kingship, as one that confers favours rather than obligations; as one that tolerates laxity in return for a superficial profession of allegiance. It is still possible that the children of the kingdom be cast into the outer darkness, because they have conceived the kingdom as privilege rather than devotion; because they have thought themselves the favourites of Providence, rather than the slaves of God.

THE EIGHTH MEDITATION

THE EIGHTH MEDITATION

HIS ONLY SON

Let us listen to the words of the Father —

THIS is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him.

Let us picture —

The Mount of the Transfiguration. Our Lord has chosen three of his Apostles and brought them here. Imagine them toiling up the mountain side, wondering what new experience is before them. Our Lord is always opening new experiences to them. Think of the constant wonder that our Lord must have been to his Apostles. Such undreamed-of sayings: such startling revelations come from him. He is always taking men up into mountains

of vision, exceeding high. From the summit they look out over the towns of the Holy Land, each name recalling wonderful dealings of God with his people. And then, as they look back at our Lord, the stupefying change. His face—that familiar face—where they were wont to read eager love, sympathetic understanding, or, at times, quick disapproval—that face shines as the sun. And then the vision: Moses and Elijah, and the words half-understood: St. Peter's suggestion: the pointless suggestion of a dazed man who felt that he ought to say something: and then the voice from the cloud, "This is my beloved Son." The vision passes and there remains with them "Jesus only": remains, too, an imperishable memory of a veil drawn aside while human eyes look into eternity and human ears hear the voice of the Creator. Imagine the stillness of soul with which they come down from the mountain to find themselves again in what we call "the real world," but which to them, after the mount, must have seemed but vision.

Consider, first —

That intimacy with Jesus must have as its result his unveiling of himself: it means that he lets us deeper and deeper into his secret until we see his face shine as the sun: until we perceive in some measure the hidden side of his life: until we find

his ultimate explanation in that he is the beloved Son.

We read our Gospels at first with the perception of a man who now and again does wonderful and inexplicable things, who stupefies us with displays of superhuman power, who troubles our consciousness with utterances of whose mysterious depths we are dimly conscious, while we know that we only clasp the fringes of them. But as we read and read again with sympathetic meditation our vision is clarified, and the garments of human words wherein the revelation is contained becomes white and glistening, and we catch the underlying significance—"This is my beloved Son."

The Apostles whom he chose rose from that first wonder-smitten stage of unfamiliarity, that sense of being in an untravelled country of words and acts where previous experience was of small use as a guide, and the accustomed ways of looking at life were being set aside, to the perception of a new and deeper consistency in dealing with life, which was the result of its being viewed and judged from the standpoint of a personality which is freed from human limitations and conventions and contradictions, and of which the secret must be sought in the intimate relation of their Master with God.

This first stage was marked by their acceptance with Jesus as the Messiah. In the later stage their

conceptions of the Messiah deepened to a conception of his divinity, as alone consistent with his words and acts. This experience is repeated in each of us as we approach Jesus through the contemplation of his life.

Consider, second —

We miss this if we linger at the foot of the mountain with the crowd, and refuse his invitation to go with him to the heights where alone visions may be seen and voices heard. The difficulty of the ascent deters many feet, and explains why so many can still think of Jesus as only some sort of human leader; or accepting the traditions of the Church, as to his real personality, yet possess but a motionless faith, having failed of the personal experience of him which alone reveals his secret. Let us ask ourselves whether there has been this failure of energy in us. Whether our search for his secret has stopped at the mountain foot where we vainly struggle to heal imbecile children, and find our faith too weak to overcome the devil's temptation because of our lack of spiritual discipline. Doubt and hesitancy and half-heartedness and weariness of service are banished, not when we have heard or even seen his wondrous works, but when we have actually been with him in the Holy Mount. But when we have once seen him transfigured before us, and

had his meaning revealed to us by the voice of the Father, then we return to the routine of life with a new hopefulness and a new power, because in discovering the secret of Jesus we have discovered the secret of ourselves, that by our union with him we are so united with God, that we are lifted above earth to dwell with him in heavenly places, in such wise that we no longer grope doubtfully and impotently in the mists that wrap the mountain foot, but from the security of the hills look out upon the world and life made plain by the flashing splendour of the revelation of God.

Let us pray, then —

To ascend with Jesus to the Mount of Transfiguration ; so to meditate upon his life, that the reality of his Sonship may become plain to us, and we also may learn to realise our vocation as the sons of God.

O God, who on the mount didst reveal to chosen witnesses thine Only Begotten Son wonderfully transfigured, in raiment white and glistening, mercifully grant that we, being delivered from the disquietude of this world, may be permitted to behold the King in his beauty, who with thee, O Father, and thee, O Holy Ghost, liveth and reigneth, one God world without end.

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I have already in an earlier meditation spoken as seemed necessary of the eternal sonship of our Lord. I shall, therefore, in asking you to think of this clause of the Creed—his only Son—pass by so much of the subject as concerns the eternal relation of the persons of the Trinity and speak only of our Lord's Sonship as that is manifested to us.

Our Lord likes to speak of himself as son of man, thus emphasising that relation, that identity of interest, that solidarity with us, which is the result of his Incarnation. But in the background there must always be the thought that the Incarnation effected any result because the person incarnate is the Son of God. He came forth from the Father and came into the world: and it is this mission that rises to our minds when we think of him as the Son of God: we think only with effort of the eternal generation of the Son of God: and when we have made our best effort have got little that the human mind can fathom. But we think easily of that sending of the divine Son into the world to be the Saviour of the world, which is the central theme of the Christian religion.

One of the things that first impresses us in our Lord's work is the ever-present consciousness of mission that we perceive in him. Whatever he does is done with reference to this. There is in him nothing of the tentative that we feel present

when we are studying the life of the human leader. As we turn the earlier pages of the biographies, whose final chapters we know will chronicle great achievements and the great responsibilities of life nobly met, we are impressed by the blindness with which our hero is going forth into the future. If he could foresee, there are so many things he would do differently. Here are opportunities missed, and their energy is exercised in directions which will be mere waste from the point of view of the later life. There is much that is tentative and experimental: and when at last the career is found, it is, from the human side, found almost by chance. You do not feel this groping towards the unknown in our Lord; you feel, though you may not see how, that all his acts or words are from the first selected with reference to their bearing upon his mission. To the careless reader of the Gospel it may seem that he is a mere wandering teacher that gathers crowds to hear him where he can, and is sowing the seed that may or may not fructify, snatching a success here, or accepting a failure there, as any teacher must: but a little deeper study reveals a reference of all he does to the central purpose of his mission. His teaching is not a mere hopeful casting of seed broadcast, if perchance some may fall on good ground and take root: rather he is carefully testing human souls for the purpose of draw-

ing from the multitudes such, if any there be, as can and will co-operate in the great work. He is not trying to convert as many as possible: he is trying to discover in whom sympathy with his aims and love of his person will furnish the suitable starting point for his work. And as God makes use of the evil as well as the good in working to his ends, so our Lord chooses not only a St. Peter and a St. John but also a Judas with a view of their serviceableness. He himself selects the facts of his own human life with the same end in view; choosing pain and suffering and death because through them lies the road to the success of his mission.

And a successful human life is one lived in the same spirit, is it not? A life lived with the same careful selection and rejection of possible facts and experiences with the view to their influence on life as a whole, on the pre-determined end of life. How frequently our failures result from neglect of this obvious lesson to be drawn from our Lord's treatment of his mission. We do not fail through defective intention: we fail through clumsiness and carelessness of execution. We fail because we will not face the hardness and the discipline that are involved in the course of action that will lead to success. We grow very weary under the strain and the will fails and we abandon the work before we have attained our end. Take a very common mat-

ter. We are constantly complaining that our prayers are not answered: but what do we mean by our prayers? A few petitions offered now and again, a collect said with a special intention. We have knocked, we say, and the door has not been opened. Now read this verse of the Gospel of St. Luke: "And it came to pass in those days, that he went up into a mountain to pray and continued all night in prayer to God." That is the prayer that is answered: it continues until it is answered. St. Paul reports of his work that it is carried on in weariness and painfulness, but not therefore abandoned. If we are convinced that it is God's will that we undertake a certain work we are surely not to be shaken in this conviction by its apparent failure. I remember the case of a priest who determined to form a men's club in his parish and called a meeting of men for the purpose of effecting an organisation. No one but the sexton attended. The priest and the sexton agreed to say a prayer daily for the club. For more than a year the meeting of the club was announced each Sunday without any further increase of membership. But the priest and the sexton still said the collect: and at last the club actually came into existence. The life of a priest or of a sister must go to ruin again and again if it depended for its continuance upon actually realised accomplishment. But it does not depend

upon that, it depends upon the sense of divine vocation to the work and life. There may be also all sorts of failure experienced; the one failure that is impossible is failure to keep on.

What lies at the root of our Lord's Sonship as manifested in his earthly mission is the love of the Holy Trinity for men. The love of God is emphasised to us when we contemplate the barrier that had to be broken down, the dreary wastes of pain that had to be traversed and the dangers that had to be encountered before it could be manifested at all. This is one of the most astonishing of all the astonishing utterances of Holy Scripture: "In this was manifested the love of God toward us because that God sent his Only Begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." Humanity has never been slow to recognize its own evil case: and it is written whole libraries of passionate declamation upon the theme of its sufferings. It has met the facts of its lot with an heroic optimism which the facts themselves seem to prove mere insanity: it has cursed God and died in bitter rebellion against a fate it could not change. But no human appreciation of the evils that are involved in life equals the insight and intensity of the divine appreciation of the same facts. God does not deny the facts or the evil of them. He does not apologise for them as men have attempted to apologise,

through over-zeal for God's honour, by asserting that the evil is only apparent, or some lower kind of good. No: God accepts the facts and sends the Only Begotten Son to the rescue: and that we are pitied and sought of God is the consolation, if not the explanation, of all our ill and pain.

This mission of the Son, then, is a mission of pity and self-sacrifice consequent upon pity—the coming to the rescue of one who might have conceivably stood apart. You say that, for this world, at least, the mission is ineffective: that nothing is hindered or bettered. But is that true? Not one pain, men say, has been abolished by the Gospel. Whatever pains we have gotten rid of, we have gotten rid of by the advance of humanity's knowledge of itself. Jesus healed, if you will, a sick man here and there; but he abolished no disease, and modern science is doing that. Disease after disease loses its power before the advance of modern medicine. But the Gospel has done for those who will accept it what no science can or will do. It has abolished the greatest of all diseases—fear. It left us no doubt with our pain-racked bodies till such time as we ourselves shall find the remedies for pain. But it left us fearless before the ultimate consequence of disease, death. With a gloriously sound body we may still look out with staring and fear-smitten eyes: but with the Gospel of the Son

in our hands we may look from a body pain-racked and tortured, with eyes that smile and are satisfied, because they look not out into a feared unknown, but look out through a darkness that has broken and see the face of God.

The mission of the Son, therefore, is a mission, not to effect immediate palliation of the evils that beset us, but to effect a change in our eternal relations, which when once we realise it, is far more to us than any remedy of present conditions could be. He effects this change by self-identification with us, through which we are raised to a share in his own Sonship. Instead of making us, as modern speculation would suggest that he ought to have done, if his purpose was at all to help us, healthy and happy animals, in a world freed from care and sorrow, he made us the sons of God and partakers of the divine nature. He lowered himself in order to raise us to himself. It is only because we take short and limited views of existence that we fail to feel the significance of the divine action. Most of us have but a vague and theoretical interest in the future. It is only with immense difficulty that the average man thinks of himself as immortal in any such way as shall affect his present life. But it is only because of our immortality that the mission of the Son is important. Christianity affects our social position in the present world: but on the

whole that effect is in the nature of a by-product. Having become the sons of God and acting in that character, we do improve the world about us because we encourage the things that are pure and noble and Christ-like and eliminate the contrary things.

In other words, by being raised to the state of sonship we become partakers of the mission of our Lord. For sonship must be an active quality in us as it was in him. We realise that we are not in the world vaguely to do good, but to perceive and to co-operate with the purpose of God. This means, among other things, seeking work through Christ, not seeking Christ through work. The opposite is frequently commended. "Be active in good works and you cannot fail to please and to find God." It is not so sure: you may quite fail to find God, and in place of him find a self amused or gratified, absorbed in its own activities: you may, by that road, quite easily miss the need of God, and come to value work as an end and not as a ministry. The love of our neighbour as our neighbour tends to lose vitality through the paltriness of the neighbour viewed as the human individual in greater or less need. We tend to tire of beggars and drunkards and harlots. We feel less the need of aiding them and more the need of eliminating them. Indeed, charity is greatly in disfavour of to-day. We only

recover our equilibrium when we get back to the biblical view. The human individual has claims upon us to which we gladly respond, not because he is a man, but because he is a divine. He is the son of God, however degraded and strayed. He is the representative of Christ to whom we minister when we minister to him. "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren ye did it unto me."

But, as I have already pointed out, we misunderstand our Lord's mission if we regard it as a mission of relief. Only accidentally did it relieve men. It sought to put society upon a new and more stable foundation by the creation of the Kingdom of God. Ideally, the kingdoms of this world are to be displaced or transformed into the new kingdom. It is the new heaven and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness: new, because righteousness dwells in it. We have no right to wave this conception aside as negatived by the event. The event is not yet. No doubt the parochial system of the present-day church is not the new heaven and the new earth, or appreciably on the way towards it. But all the more shall we look for it and decline to acquiesce in the pessimism of those who murmur, "Since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the foundation of the world." The mission of the Son of God is not yet completed: it entered a new stage

when it was committed to that extended Sonship which is the Body of Christ. At present the accomplishment of the mission of Christ waits on our wills. The new heaven and the new earth become realities as fast as we want them to be real. The tremendous amount of social injustice that there is and that the Church is weakly acquiescing in is not of God's creation but of man's, and will vanish when men want it to vanish. It is not a divine law that entails poverty and suffering upon humanity, but human stupidity. We, in our laxity, have almost forgotten the line of demarcation between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world. We are confused between purely worldly motives and ideals and those of the kingdom. The kingdom will begin to come with power when Christian society shall once more conceive itself as a thing apart, with a mission to transform the world.

It is a pitiful thing to see the mission that Christ began, the mission of converting the world to righteousness, and which was maintained, in theory at least, so long, as the ideal of the Christian Church, pass from the Church to those who care nothing for the religious ideal and cannot handle it. We cannot blind ourselves to the fact that to-day, the forces that make for the betterment of society have largely passed out of the control of the Body of Christ. Men live and work to-day

with immense earnestness of a new heaven and earth wherein dwelleth, not righteousness, but justice—which is quite a different thing. For justice does not imply an inner change, a conversion, but an outward relation. Men are looking for a world ordered by their own efforts and unrelated to God. For this ideal they display all the zeal of primitive Christians, while the successors of the primitive Christians, of the men who revolutionised the Roman Empire, look on with languid protests at the secularisation of all things which they had not the energy to keep sacred. We have secular education and secular marriage and secular charity only because the Church lost the sense of its mission and the splendour of its vocation as the representative of the Son of God. The pity is that these secularised things could not exist except as supported by Christianity. The resources of the Church are drawn off to them.

“He made a whip of small cords and drove them out, and his disciples remembered that it was written, the zeal of thine house hath even consumed me.” It is written still: and the zeal still burns in heaven; but the flame of it has died on the earth. The modern representatives of the kingdom of God are anxious about good music and decorous preaching and a large confirmation class. “The rector presented the largest class in the history of the par-

ish. The large proportion of men was noticeable.”
“Is it peace, Jehu?”

One feels of oneself that whatever else one is doing one is not fulfilling the mission of the Son of God. One is thrown back on the poor consolation that one can at least cultivate one's own garden and realise oneself as the child of God. It is only a partial thing at best; but one does show oneself the Son of God by the conquests that one makes. At any rate we can have our own lights trimmed and burning and be ready to go in with the Bridegroom to the marriage. There is yet time, the foolish virgins said: but the wise were always ready. “Behold I come as a thief,” our Lord says. There will come the day of awakening when the Presence of the Lord and the Advent of his kingdom will be proclaimed. Happy shall we be if in that day we recognise his voice and go out to meet him. There is a sound of a gong in the tops of the mulberry trees even now. The world is ready to rebel against the hideous slavery that we call civilisation. It is quite possible that the sleeping Church will be as incapable as was the Jewish Church of recognising the Advent of its King, in an unexpected and, to it, an indecorous form. It may again see no comeliness in him that it should desire him. Happy shall we be, if when we would pass him by thinking, “It is the gardener,” he speaks to us and we fall at his feet, crying, “Rabboni, my Master.”

THE NINTH MEDITATION

THE NINTH MEDITATION

OUR LORD

Let us listen to the words of our Lord —

WE call me Master and Lord, and ye say well,
for so I am.

Let us picture —

The scene after the passion supper when our Lord rises and girds himself with a towel and washes his disciples' feet. We see them still reclining about the supper table and submitting with astonishment to this strange act of our Lord. Most of them, though they cannot understand the reason for this act of our Lord, yet submit in silence, content to believe that it has a reason. But with his usual impulsiveness, St. Peter protests. St. Peter

is always assuming that he understands the problem when the other disciples are content to accept the action of our Lord. St. Peter is ready to protest against his course. But he quickly recedes before our Lord's words, "If I wash thee not thou hast no part in me." Try to see our Lord as he passes from one to the other of them, pouring water on their feet and then wiping them. "I am among you as he that serveth," he had once said. A God, wiping men's feet—do we revolt from the thought? Only for a moment, if we know anything of God. This is quite what one would expect God to do. He has always been wiping men's feet—attending to their least necessities. God is always with us, providentially directing our lives. We can sound our own experience and find God there intimately caring for all our needs. Recall your own experience, how intimate God has been with you. How few your sins have been in the vast multitude of the sins of the world; yet God has heard your confessions and been faithful and just to forgive you your sins.

Consider, first —

That we quite miss the facts about God when we consider him a God afar off and not nigh at hand. The Incarnation was intended to break down that thought of God by revealing, not some new attitude

of God, some afterthought in his method of dealing with men, but what had been his constant attitude toward them. Yet we still find immense difficulty in making this revealed attitude of God practical to our lives—in basing our attitude to God upon it. We still tend to think of parts of our lives as too paltry to be brought to God—of things as too small to be put in our prayers. We still think of this act of our Lord as being a temporary act, undertaken, doubtless, to teach a needed lesson to the apostles. They were going out to deal with men and needed a lesson in the virtue of humility. But it is not that God humbled himself once to teach humility, but that he is always humbling himself that he may minister to our needs. We have here not an exceptional act, but an example of his common method. The delights of the divine wisdom are with the sons of men. We cannot grasp our true relation to God till we have grasped this fact. Heathenism grasped it, but in the guise of polytheism—the myriad gods that presided over the myriad acts of human life. Modern speculation grasps it, but in the form of pantheism—that God is all and in all. Christianity alone gets the full truth—the personal care of a personal God for all the needs of his creatures. Let us adore our Lord as he wipes the disciples' feet, seeing in him God in his constant ministry to us.

Consider, second —

That humility is really an attribute of greatness. Our Lord is humbling himself, not debasing himself. It is a strange idea of greatness to assume that it is that which deals with great things. Jesus never shows himself more our Lord than precisely at such points in his life as this, when the extremity of his love and care are revealed. Our own supremacy of life is shown, not in the way we do the rare things of great importance that it comes to us to deal with—to some of us they never come—but in the way in which we order our lives as a whole, in the care that we spend on the least details of them. Impatience of detail is a mark of littleness: of pride, rather than humility. Consider that the perfection of any work is a perfection of detail. We form a conception of what we have to do, and we easily block it out in the large. But to embody the intellectual conception perfectly in the material form is matter of infinite care in detail. Watch the sculptor finishing the statue. Watch the painter finishing the portrait. What an infinity of care on—I was going to say trifles; but rather on the most important part of his work. Is it otherwise in human life? The first steps of the spiritual life are so easy that we think that we are going to fare on to the end without difficulty. But watch the finishing of a saint. He has overcome the great

temptations, as we are wont to denominate them with our false conception of values. But really the great temptations are the minute deflections from God's will that just spoil the perfection of the character. The greatness of our love of God will be shown in precisely this minute care not to vary from his will at all.

So let us pray —

For minute fidelity to God's will. For the humility that looks on the least sin as an object of care. The fidelity that will not consider our work done till all is fashioned after the likeness of the Master. Pray for mastery over all life.

Almighty and Everlasting God, who, of thy tender love towards mankind, hast sent thy Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, to take upon him our flesh, and to suffer death upon the cross, that all mankind should follow the example of his great humility; mercifully grant that we may both follow the example of his patience, and also be made partakers of his resurrection: through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord.

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This title, which seems at first to suggest some power—the relation of the ruler and the ruled; to bring before one's mind the sweep of an irresistible will, dominating and controlling all men; which

seems to come upon us to crush us with the weight of omnipotence; which leaves us stunned and fainting with the sense of helplessness; becomes filled with hope and joy and a sense of intimate personal relationship when we note the qualifying presence of the pronoun—*Our Lord*. It is not the unlimited power of one who dominates us that comes into view, but the influential power that flows from the fact that our Lord is the Head of that Body of which we all are the members. He is our Lord because he is the source of all life and all activity in those who, through his redeeming work, have been knit into oneness with him. There are other words, as we have seen, to express the relation of our Lord to the universe, in which he exercises his eternal office of Mediator between the Creator and the creature; but under this word we have to think of him in his incarnate relation of ruler of those whom his sacrificing love has redeemed and gathered into a living communion with himself.

We shall be careful then not to think of the rule of our Lord as the expression of an external and compulsive power. We are apt to picture God's rule of us in terms of his rule of the material universe; but there, too, we misconceive the facts when we read them as of a universe ruled by laws that are imposed upon it from the outside. The real laws of the world are the expressions of God's pres-

ence in the world, and an exterior God compelling inert matter to take certain forms is foreign to the Christian conception both of the world and of God. If we remember this, we shall not be misled by false analogies to mistaken conclusions as to the nature of the rule that he exercises over us who are the members of his Body. The rule that our Lord exercises over us is the expression of his indwelling presence. It is not compulsive, though the failure to respond to it must have consequences—but the influence of his life, which flows out from him the Head to us the members. And, therefore, when we think of our side of the relation, we think not of submission to a ruler but of response to a life. The obedience of the Christian is his willing and joyful response to the life of Christ which is in him. It is said of him that he no longer lives, but Christ liveth in him; that is, his mind and will is so assimilated to the mind and will of Christ that he responds to its impulses and reflects its purpose and seeks its ends. We are most of us, no doubt, very far from perfect response; perfect response is the life of the blessed in heaven; but such response is the ideal of our lives, and we are learning to estimate our lives in the terms of their response to the indwelling Presence. Progress means greater and more willing response, and we judge of our distance from the ideal, and of our imperfections, by the

difficulty that we have in responding. As we measure a force by the resistance it calls forth, so we measure the power of sin in our lives by the resistance our lives make to the will of God.

We usually express this power theologically in terms of *grace*. But here again we fall into the same danger if we do not watch the meaning of our words. It is quite possible—many have done so—to conceive of grace as an influence emanating from God—and we are again in the region of the external. We must hold fast to the fact that, as the outcome of the Incarnation, we are united to God and God dwells in us with a personal presence. Union with God in Christ is the essential fact of the Christian life, or what we mean by being in a state of grace.

Grace, then, is the active aspect of this state of union; it is the dynamic presence of God in the soul of the Christian. And here again, the life of the Christian is the other term of this relationship—it is his response to the presence of God.

This Lordship of Christ expresses itself through his mystical Body; it is there that we meet with his design for our lives, there that our response shows itself in the development of Christian character and in the obedience of the Christian life. I shall consider this response from the point of view of obedience, for though it is possible to sep-

arate character and conduct in idea, practically they are inseparable, and conduct is only the externalisation of character. "By their fruits ye shall know them." The only way we have of judging of character is by its embodiments in action. Our attitude towards the will of our Lord as expressed through his Body will supply us with a sufficient working test of our recognition of his Lordship over us.

I do not here discuss the notion of the Church—that will come before us later on. For the present it is enough to say that the Church is the Body of Christ and the sphere of his manifestation. We are not concerned with any activities of his outside the Body which is constituted by the union with himself and with each other of those whom he has purchased with his blood and brought into living contact with himself. Through this Body, he expresses his will for men. And our response to this will takes the form of loyal obedience.

There is, in the first place, an ascertained will of our Lord which expresses itself through the formularies of faith. We might consider that faith as a system of dogmatic statements which is imposed by authority. I do not wish to be understood as denying that point of view. But as these meditations are not a system of dogmatics, I think for our present purpose it will be better to adopt another line of

approach. Let us look at the formularies as an outline statement of the experience of the Christian consciousness in regard to Christ and his work. This does not claim to be an exhaustive description, but it is sufficient for our present purpose. What attitude is imposed upon us toward these formularies by our acknowledgment of Jesus Christ as our Lord?

The importance and meaning of obedience, in any case, is, I suppose, to be found in the fact that obedience is introductory to experience. We impose obedience upon children because we know that the things we compel them to learn, and which they would not learn if left to their own inclinations, will become fruitful to them at a later stage of life. We meet the boy's impatient, "What is the use of learning that?" with the assurance that he will shortly find the use of it; that unless he is submissive to the guidance of those who know more than he, he will most likely pass much of his later life knocking at closed doors—doors of which he might have brought the keys with him from his previous training, but which he impatiently declined to have because he did not see their use. The first step to any experience of our own is through obedience to the experience of those who have gone before. The young student who wishes to give himself to the work of investigation in any branch of science,

finds the first stages of his intellectual journey made easy for him by the work of those who have gone before him. He has not to cut out pathways through the virgin forests of the world of nature; there are already well-trodden roads there. His ambition is aroused, his enthusiasm kindled by the works of the great masters of science. Their names and works, he finds, are held in reverence by all his teachers. Even in the case of those whose work has been superseded in great degree by the progress made since their time, he finds their work estimated with reference to the circumstances of the period in which they lived, and from the point of view of whatever positive contribution they made to knowledge. He will not anywhere be told that if he hopes to make any progress in scientific training, he must begin by treating the labours of his predecessors with contempt, by scorning their experience and ridiculing their equipment for their work. He will not be told to make a clean sweep of the past and begin at the beginning. He will not be told that the watchword of the modern method in science is "back to Aristotle"—all that lies between is ignorance and blunder.

And yet that is much the way in which the beginner in religion is treated to-day. There is a very widely influential phase of religious thought at present, which practically asks us to forego all the

experiences of the Christian centuries and go back to the Gospels, or some fragments of them, and build our religion for ourselves out of the materials we find there. It will no doubt be objected that this is not a fair statement of the case. That what is objected to is not experience, but the creedal statements built up by philosophy on the basis of certain Christian facts. But while this, on the face of it looks true, it is not true. The formularies of the Church are not the outcome of the cold-blooded application of metaphysics to the facts of the Gospel, but they are the attempt, forced upon the Church by the fact that it lives and thinks, to state its experience of the Lord in consistent and intelligible language. The only alternative to development would have been intellectual stagnation.

If Christians had not thought about the meaning of our Lord and his words and acts the Christian Church would have been without a Creed; it would have needed none, because it would long ago have perished. Let us approach our Creed, then, as the formulation of Christian experience; as educational formulæ which will open the door of a like experience to us. We have not to approach Christ as an unknown and mysterious character, concerning whom we must first of all formulate some theory; we approach him in the light of the experience of nearly two thousand years of Christian living. We

accept the fact that he is "very God of very God," precisely as the young scientist accepts the doctrine of evolution, as a formula embodying the experience of the past and which will open the door of experience to him. I approach religious experience with the, if you like, dogmatic prepossession that Jesus is God; and acting on that I find that my experience of him as it grows justifies my method of approach. I quite agree, as I have said in a preceding meditation, that the man who stops at dogmatic affirmations has gained nothing of any significance for life. But the very point of the dogmatic affirmation itself is that it should point the way to effective action which shall issue in assured experience. The experience of Christendom is that Jesus is God; and the surest way to the personal knowledge of Jesus is to start from the formulations of the experience of Christendom, and not from the hypothesis that Jesus is an unknown quantity the value of which is to be sought by independent investigation.

That attitude which I have just indicated should be ours toward all the teaching of the Church. Through the Church we approach the Lordship of Christ. Loyalty means at least so much; taking the utterances of the Church at their face value and honestly using them as our guide in the matter of Christian living. The formularies of the Church do not block the progress of thought or discourage

human progress if they are properly used—used, that is, to throw light on the relation of the soul to the Saviour and to direct that soul into the way of peace. Certainly if the Creeds are to be used as handbooks of metaphysics and psychology, not as guides of life, the result is likely to be disastrous.

But the Lordship of Christ exercised through his Body makes broader demands upon us than the demand that we seek to guide our lives in the light of the formularies of faith. There is also required of us loyalty towards that part of the Catholic Church in which by the providence of God our lives are lived. In the present divided state of Christendom we are members of a particular communion—the Church in the United States of America. Or, expressing it more broadly, we are members of the Anglican Communion; our allegiance is there; so that we must be loyal. Now, I regret to say, and I feel that it ought to be said quite plainly, that no part of the Church Catholic has ever had so little of loyal service from her children as the Anglican Communion gets to-day. I am quite ready to admit that in order to be kept in a sound state, any institution must be subjected to constant criticism. But useful criticism must not be factious and carping. There is no doubt that the authorities of the Church are kept in a state of doubt and discouragement, because, instead of meeting with charitable judg-

ment and sympathetic aid, they are subjected to constant misjudgment and misrepresentation. And this is true, not only of the general government of the Church, but of the local government. There is the self-will and utter individualism of priests who, if things do not go to their mind, will throw up the priesthood to which they profess themselves to have been called, and denying the grace of the Sacraments and the truth of their own preaching and profession, and leave the communion of that very Church which had conferred on them the Christian character. There is the utter insubordination of some among the laity whose only law is their own unregenerate will, who do not hesitate to make the work of parishes of none effect if they cannot have their own way. There is the weakness of the Church in general and the parishes in particular, which are hampered in their work and find expansion impossible because the money of their members is spent in mere selfishness or directed to the support of institutions and causes which, to say the least, have not the claim on their support that the Church which gives them their Sacraments has.

Now none could for a moment assert that the Church, looked at from the human side, that is as it is an institution confided to men to be carried on, is perfect. Its lack of external unity is to be deplored. The deficiencies of its discipline are to be

deplored. The deficiencies of its members are to be deplored. But it still is true that the way of self-will and rebellion is not the way to correct anything. The deficiencies of the human organization can only be corrected and its legitimate work carried on with success, by the loyal co-operation of all its members, and their abandonment of self-will in loyally seeking to do the will of their Divine Head. Our present state is a lamentable display of the lack of what our fathers called "vital piety," and of our need of a revival of that piety.

For what we may call external loyalty will, after all, be but the expression of that intimate relation to our Lord which is effected by our incorporation in him. Christian living is our response to the influences that flow to us as the result of our being in Christ. And one of the first signs that will manifest our growth in Christian character will be the subsidence of self-will. We shall seek to know God's will through the organisation and formularies of the Church, or through the answers to our prayers and the providential guiding of our lives. This will of our Lord for us is an ever-present and ever-acting will; there is no part of our life that is withdrawn from it; it touches us everywhere. For the most part we shall be unconscious of it, it having become habitual for us to obey; but when our will conflicts with it, then it will manifest itself as a

certain pressure that we call conscience. That is why God's will often seems difficult and obstructive of life—because it makes itself felt at the points of resistance. We may live twenty-three hours in the day in quietude and peace, but the twenty-fourth is characterised by sharp struggle, because then our will tended to turn from the will of God, and the attempt to turn developed the pain of a wounded conscience. To any one with Christian ideals obedience is an easy thing; it is disobedience that is hard.

As Christians living in the obedience of our Lord, we become to the world centres of power and light; we transmit the influence of Christ to others. This is the method which Christ uses to extend the effectiveness of his will. The world seeing that will done in us, is attracted to the most beautiful thing it knows, the Character of Christ, even by our imperfect reflection of it. And it is not only attracted, it is constrained; constrained by the subtle yet powerful influence that character always exercises. But when we notice that our character has this missionary vocation, and we set ourselves deliberately to increase our influence, as surely we are bound to do, we must beware of a danger that is very real. The point of departure in making our Lord's will effective in the world is not in attempting to dominate others, but in showing ourselves dominated by the will of Christ. There is a certain type of per-

sonality that seeks to dominate and absorb others; to make them over in its own image. You know people who impose themselves—their will, their opinions, their religious method—upon you. Their ideal, usually quite unconscious, is that you should be imitations of them. You must read their books and say their prayers and join their societies. They have a zeal for God, no doubt; but their disciples rarely get beyond them. It is the difficulty of parties and schools of thought that they reproduce their leaders. But the function of the Christian is to reproduce Christ, and so far as his personality is an obstructing medium, he is a failure. The virtue of our contact with others lies in this, that it spiritually raises and frees those whom we influence, so that they do not take us as standards, but only as witnesses of the work of the converting grace of God.

Our Lord's method was not a method of constraint, but of tolerance and patience. We would do well to copy that. It will save us much pain and disappointment. He accepted the world as he found it, without impatience with its obvious defects and failures, and set himself to make it a better world. I fancy some of us would like to begin with destruction and remaking: but that is not the divine method. It is significant that our Lord accepted restrictions which he had no need of, because they

still had significance and helpfulness for men. He submitted himself to the law; he received circumcision and the baptism of John. There is much that is suggestive in this attitude. It is a creative not a destructive method. It aims at establishing sympathy that it may attain influence. That may suggest much in our dealing with others, in our often impatience with the tolerance of the Church. It is a method that declines to entangle itself in useless controversies, because it understands that the controversies will settle themselves when its positive work is done. We are liable sometimes—are we not?—to assume that vexed and disputed questions must be settled before we can go on to positive work. We insist on our differences rather than our agreements, thus making it often impossible to influence those whom we approach with the best intentions of helpfulness.

Perhaps, too, we may apply the same line of thought in regard to our spiritual progress. Are we not in danger of false methods there? We spend so much energy in mere fighting. Face to face resistance of temptation and sin we assume is the inevitable method. We must win our battle, no doubt, but still, one does often feel the helplessness of this face to face battle. Is not the more helpful method that of building up strength? Those who are physically strong are less open to the contagion

of disease. On the whole it is better to gain immunity from infection than to pass one's life trying to avoid the places where microbes lurk. So the great preventative of sin is spiritual health. Many a soul which has tried to overcome temptation till it was ready to despair, has found relief by cultivating the positive side of the Christian life, and been surprised to find that the old temptation had become meaningless.

There is something of this in conversion, is there not? It is the perfectness of our union with our Lord that protects us, for through that union our life responds to all the motions of his will,

THE TENTH MEDITATION

THE TENTH MEDITATION

WHO WAS CONCEIVED BY
THE HOLY GHOST

Let us listen to the words of the Angel —

THE Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee.

Let us picture to ourselves —

The scene of the Annunciation, not as some of the great artists have conceived it, a princess in a noble palace, surrounded by the splendour of royalty; but rather as it must have happened, in some humble dwelling place bearing all the marks of poverty. Picture an angel appearing to a maiden. Her surprise and confusion must have been overwhelm-

ing; and then, too, quite naturally, she was afraid. There was surprise and fear passing into awe-smitten wonder as the sense of the angelic message crept slowly into her mind—she, Mary of Nazareth, chosen to be the instrument of God's mercy to mankind. Pure as she had been all her life long, and near to God, she could not have dreamed of such nearness as this. One seems to read in her face the internal conflict of contending thoughts. Is it just a dream, more vivid than any she had ever had, but destined to pass as they? Is she really standing in an heavenly presence, listening to a message from God? Her perplexity breaks out in the words, "How can this be?" One feeling we may be sure was absent, joy. That might come later; but now only fear and perplexity. Yes; in a moment, one thing else: perfect submission to the will of God. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me even as thou wilt." And the angel departed from her leaving her to her thoughts, and a new sense of the nearness of God.

Consider, first —

What is actually taking place here. In the womb of the Virgin, God and man are uniting—uniting forever. It is the moment of the Incarnation. Let us in silence adore God and the God-man and the Holy Ghost.

The second Person of the Blessed Trinity is assuming humanity to himself becomes the new life of humanity. As his instrument in this mighty work he has chosen the weak things of the world. From the outset he exposes himself and his Blessed Mother and his work to the reproach of man. He seems to place himself at a quite unnecessary disadvantage and make his work both more difficult of accomplishment from his side, and on our side more difficult of acceptance, than it need have been. But consider that this is the usual divine method—to raise difficulties that shock the reason and can only be overcome by faith. The methods of the Holy Spirit are comprehensible only by those who by communion with him have attained to spiritual discernment. He must come upon us, too, and overshadow us, and impart to us the gift of heavenly wisdom ere we can follow him in the revealed methods of his operation. Is it our experience that the mysteries of the Spirit's working are becoming plain to us, or are we still, as at the beginning of our walk, beset with doubt and difficulty? Has our spiritual life been indeed accompanied by an unfolding of the mind of the Spirit, an increase in spiritual discernment? Do the acts of God which once, perchance, were stumbling blocks, seem to us now the natural and, indeed, the inevitable methods of God?

Consider, second —

How intimately we are concerned in this act of God. It is not some miracle occurring in a far-off time of which we read and which we accept because it is related in the documents of our religion. God is still Incarnate, and the effects of that Incarnation are manifest in us. In a real sense, Christ is being formed in us by the operation of the Holy Ghost. Our regeneration which took us up into Christ and made us the children of God was his operation. Christ is being formed in us day by day. The mind of Christ is being made known to us. All our spiritual life springs out of this primary operation of the Holy Ghost whereby God and man became one in the womb of Mary. Do we keep in mind this ever-present action of the Holy Ghost in our lives? The qualities that we acquire that express the vitality of our religious life are called by St. Paul the fruits of the Spirit—love, joy, peace and the rest. This thought of a religion as a process whereby something permanent is being formed, rather than as a series of unrelated acts of obedience to rule or law, is of great significance. The spiritual man is not the carnal man with a new set of habits, but he is a new creation by the operation of the Holy Ghost. Christ is forming us; not an imitation of Christ, but that *alter Christus* that is a

member of Christ because he lives by the same life being partaker of his nature. Is Christ being formed in me? Are there signs of conformity to him evident in my life? Have I escaped from the life of rules to the life of union?

Let us pray, then —

That the Holy Ghost shall so come on us that Christ shall be formed in us. Pray to live in the shadow of the Highest.

Grant, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that the splendour of thy brightness may shine upon us, and the light of thy Light confirm with the illumination of the Holy Spirit the hearts of those who have been born again through thy grace: for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

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In the Incarnation of the Son of God humanity is raised to the fruition of that which had been God's thought for it in the very fact of its creation. Here, for the first time, creation becomes intelligible. All that long history of creative development which modern science describes for us, is but a stupefying and terrifying mystery, "the dream of an insane god," if we cannot escape from the limitations to which science confines us. The history of human society, as read in terms of materialism, has been depicted for us in the pages of

a very brilliant and very cynical French writer who conceives the social process as an endless series of circles. Man rises by the gradual accumulation of knowledge and skill to the height of material civilisation, only to find that this civilisation generates forces that are destructive of it, and send man back to his original savagery. From this he rises by the same slow struggle only to meet the same disaster. Humanity is a tennis ball driven from one end of the court to the other through eternity. Worlds rise and go through their process of development and decay and the whole process and every stage of it is meaningless.

The Incarnation is like a sunrise before which the shadows flee away. By it the terrifying dreams of the night of our ignorance are dissipated. Human progress is not to be conceived in the likeness of a stream dashing from its fountain source down the mountain side, and, gathering strength as it goes from its union with other streams, flowing out joyfully into the plain only to lose itself in the desert sands. We watch the career of some man of splendid intellectual and moral power. We see him year after year gathering knowledge and experience and putting them to the highest uses; we see his ripened wisdom becoming ever more fruitful for good in the society that he influences; and then he is stricken down and dies. If that is the

end of that man, we say, life is a hideous nightmare. You have but to magnify the facts till they become, not the history of an individual, but of humanity, to see the awful tragedy that human history is if we are obliged to read it in the sense of materialism. But the Incarnation gives it another meaning, shows the evolutionary process, ending, not in final catastrophe, but in the taking of manhood into God's; shows us the beginning of a new process in the birth of the new creation and the setting up of the new kingdom, the final issues of which we can only dimly infer from the glory of its beginnings.

In the womb of the Virgin, Creator and creature, God and man, are united externally—and this to which creation had looked and is its meaning, is in its turn, not an end but a beginning. That which has borne the image of the earthly, shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Humanity united to God in Christ is humanity raised to its highest capacity. It shows in the Incarnate life the possibilities of humanity united with God.

Here is Christ, in a unique and not to be repeated manner, by the union of the divine and human natures in the Person of the Son of God; but in that very closeness of union, endowing the human nature which has been so exalted, with capacity to be the means of approach through which all human

nature may be made partaker of the divine. From the Incarnate Lord flows forth that Fountain of Life whereof we may all be partakers, and by partaking of which we are united with him and with each other in the intimate communion of eternal life. This is that mystery of godliness which chases the shadows from the earth and frees man from the power of pessimistic despair.

But, it will be said, if this proclaiming of the Incarnation of God opens vistas of radiant hope to those who can receive it, to others it raises intellectual difficulties that seem insuperable. For men who are accustomed to weigh facts that are alleged to them in the indifferent scales of their producible evidence, it is hard to accept the Incarnation as a fact of human history. For them the very terms of the statement put it in the region of fantastic dreams. It shares the weakness of all miraculous and supernatural actions in that it cannot be submitted to the ordinary tests by which evidence must be weighed. The fact that it would lighten the burden that rests on us if it were true, does not justify us in assuming that it is true.

I may say, in passing, that that last sentence seems to me to contain a great fallacy of method. It seems to me that as humanity is in great spiritual and intellectual straits before the mystery of the universe, it not only has the right, but the duty

to commit itself to the guidance of an hypothesis which promises help. What else are all the philosophies of the world Are they not hypotheses that men think helpful and by the aid of which they attempt to solve the secrets of the universe and of human life?

What is progress in thought, but thus seeking helpful hypotheses and successively gathering from them for permanent usefulness so much of them as experience will justify?

Why should we not therefore ask men in whose minds the Incarnation raises difficulties that they cannot solve, to lay aside the difficulty and trust themselves to the guidance of the Incarnate Life in the hope that the honest and earnest living of it may produce an experience in the light of which the intellectual difficulties that the union of God and man in the Person of Christ raises, may be dissolved. This is the continual plea of Christianity: Test me, if you will, to the uttermost; but test me in the only way in which I can be rightly tested, by the test of life. And aside from my demand for this practical test made in the name of common justice, I offer this evidence: that millions of human beings through the course of nearly two thousand years, under all diversities of human life, and in all stages of human culture, have so tested me and not found me wanting. This is not the testimony

of antiquity; it is the testimony of your contemporaries, of your friends and companions. They have lived and are living in the strength of the Incarnate Life. The experience that those millions assert, that they have of Incarnate God, does justify any man in acting upon the hypothesis of the truth of the Incarnation, whatever of intellectual difficulty he may find in the statement of the doctrine.

And is the individual difficulty as great as we are accustomed to assume? It is not ultimately a difficulty with the nature of the evidence—the testimony of prophecy, or the credibility of the Gospel narratives—it is really the difficulty which gets in the way of the acceptance of any fact that is miraculous. Miracles are unintelligible, we are told, and any event that involves the miraculous is unacceptable in a world of material cause and effect—a world whose laws we find to be uniform.

Let us look for a moment at the opposition to the miraculous. If a man does not believe in God, naturally we have no common ground from which to discuss the miraculous. But if a man believe in God, and a God who is alive and not a philosophical formula, I cannot see on what ground he should object that miracles are contrary to the order of nature. To do so, he must assume nature to be some sort of a system, self-existent, and apart from God. Otherwise, believing as Christians believe,

that the natural world is but one sphere of the divine manifestations, there can be no objection to miracles but their unusualness and defect of evidence and their occurrence in the midst of a system of uniform laws as phenomena depending on no known causation. I think all these assumptions may be successfully disputed. For one thing, they involve an assumption that our knowledge of the universe is exhaustive and that therefore we are competent to say what does and what does not fall outside its "laws." I am entirely unprepared to admit the legitimacy of any such assumption and to allow that miraculous action is lawless action in any other sense than that of dependence upon laws unknown to us. To describe an event as miraculous is to describe it as unaccountable from the point of view of a very limited experience, as man's experience must be admitted to be.

But there is another method of approach which seems to me to remove much of the difficulty still felt in regard to the miraculous by those who believe in God as an active power in the universe. Their feeling in the matter may perhaps be roughly expressed in the dictum, "Miracles do not happen." This world as we know it is non-miraculous. If it has ever been otherwise, why should it have changed? The arguments advanced for the alleged cessation of miracles are in no degree convincing.

If it was ever a necessary method of divine action there is no reason to be seen why it is not so now. This is felt to contain strong objections to most miracles even by many of those who make an exception in the case of the Incarnation and the Resurrection.

Now under the general connotation of the miraculous, I include all supernatural actions, i. e., all actions which seem to be independent upon material laws. And from that point of view I would traverse the assertion that "Miracles do not happen." If they do *not*—if there is not a constant action of God on the world and especially upon the souls of men, then I shall have to range myself with the doubters. But if I at all understand the meaning of Christianity, it involves the assertion that miracles happen all the time; that it has been continually conscious in the whole course of its history of the living presence of God producing results that would not and could not have been produced by the laws of the material world so far as we know them. It is this uniform experience of Christendom of the action of God within and upon it, sometimes in forms purely spiritual as in conversion and the operation of grace, and sometimes in mixed forms, that it, forms in which both matter and spirit are involved, as in the healing of the sick and in answers to prayer—is a constant fact, indeed the pri-

mary fact of its experience, that removes from my mind all theoretical difficulty in regard to the miracles of the past. No doubt, as individual events they have to be estimated by their evidence and their relation to the person of the performer.

Let us turn away from this perhaps rather arid discussion, to the thought of our personal relation to the Incarnation. The Incarnation of the Son of God was wrought by the power of the Holy Ghost. It is the power of the Holy Ghost, too, that is effective in us, working the union that is between us and Incarnate God. It is through his continual work that Christ is being formed in us. Over and over again we meet in the New Testament descriptions of the life of the Christian in terms of its union with Christ, which imply that that union is the result of the extension of the Incarnate life of Christ in such wise that he lives in the believer. Christ lives in us, we live, yet not we, but Christ liveth in us. We are raised to sit with him in heavenly places. We are to grow into the perfect man, the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. Do we ever make any real attempt to grasp these sayings as descriptive of ourselves and try to correlate them with our own experience? However unusual they may at times seem as descriptions of us who live enmeshed in the activities and distractions of our social life, yet they are

true of us just so far as we have a vital, personal spiritual experience. And it is of the very utmost importance to the growth of that experience that we should hold steadily before us that wherein our true Christian character consists—its realised union with Incarnate God. It is sad to know how many good men and women to-day are missing the central meaning of Christianity, and indeed giving up Christianity altogether, just because of this failure to grasp its true significance. Many of those who suppose themselves to be the exponents of Christianity to-day have, in their anxiety to remove from it all that can offend and be a stumbling block to the natural man, ended by reducing it to a system which has no vital significance whatever, which may be rightly reckoned as but one of the multitude of forms of human thought. But Christianity is not a new knowledge or a new formulation of the old problems that have haunted and vexed men from the foundation of the world. It is not a new morality seeking to set human life on a more satisfactory basis and solve our social problems. It cannot be evaporated into a proclamation of the brotherhood of man. It is not a new revelation of conduct in terms of the Fatherhood of God. Christianity is a new life, the introduction into humanity of a vital principle that flows from the union with God and is rendered operative by the action of the

Holy Spirit, who reveals to man his destiny, as God's child, to live eternally in union with his Father.

Let us beware of those pitfalls which would reduce Christianity to an insignificant thing under the guise of making it easier of acceptance and more serviceable to human life. I know no good reason for supposing that religion should be easy of intellectual acceptance; that it should present no difficulties that the human mind must conquer before it can accept it. Religion as involving a relation with God needs must deal with matters that are beyond human understanding. As an assertion of the claims of God on human life it calls for the submission of the intellect as well as of the will. It does not call for the *abandonment* of the intellect; but for its willing submission to the conditions under which alone it can be fruitfully used in dealing with the relations between God and man established by the Incarnation. Those conditions limit it on the speculative side—man might long ago have convinced himself that by speculations he would not find God; but it leaves it free on the appreciative side to occupy itself in the study and appropriation of the truth of God as far as God has made himself known. As free speculation is one of the things that man claims as a right, he needs to be warned that it is excluded from the field of religion; that

the product of free speculation on God and the universe is not religion but philosophy. Religion gains, no doubt, from the existence of free speculation. Speculative criticism compels it to realise its limits as religion and keep its own bounds.

Nor is religion more serviceable in proportion as it is "simplified." It is possible so far to simplify religion that it ceases to perform any service that could not be better performed by some other agency. As social or ethical impulse it is only encumbered, and is felt to be encumbered, by its supernatural equipment. It is avowedly on the ground that the supernaturalism of the Church cripples the effectiveness of its social mission that we are urged to throw over the supernatural altogether. And if its social mission is the essential thing about the Christian Church, it will be wise to accept the invitation. But so long as we believe that the whole meaning of the Christian religion is to bring man into union with God and that his effective social action is a necessary product of that relation and not something independent of it that can be equally well carried on without it, we shall feel that instead of abandoning or minimising the supernatural we shall stress it more and more.

Let us shun then the danger that is ever present of seeking to live our lives on the natural level inspired by natural motives. I am convinced that

there are many who do so live—whose religion is a set of observances tacked, awkwardly enough, upon a set of commonplace conventional rules which are the real guides of their actions. For the most part they are not very conscious of the incoherence of their lives. They are not conscious that their religion is in danger of becoming the merest formalism. The trouble develops, however, when they are tempted to make some change in their conduct, from habits that they once thought Christian to those which they have thought not so; and, as they say, “they do not see why” they should not. That reveals the rift. If you do not “see why” one line of conduct is Christian and another is not, it can only be because your conduct in this respect has never been consciously related to Christianity at all. In such a case it is doubtful if you really have any conduct that you can call your own; what you have is probably the imitation of some one else’s conduct. If we are living by Christian principles, we certainly ought to be able to see the relation of them to our religion as a whole, and to appreciate the reason why one sort of conduct is Christian and another not; we should probably be spared much of doubt and difficulty if we were to stop asking what rule forbids this or enjoins that, and referred our questions of conduct to the test of Christian consistency; the test, I mean, of their consonance with

the ideals of the Christian life. Christians ought hardly to need any other guide than this.

A supernatural life will not maintain itself in us without our co-operation. It has its normal means of sustenance, neglect of which ends in atrophy or death. It is a communion, and a communion means the intermingling of two lives. It means from our Lord's side constant action; it means that on ours, our souls are now open and attent to the influences that flow from him. We know that our lives are going on well so long as we find in ourselves a ready response to these influences; the eagerness with which our lives go out in response to the revelation of God's will, the joy that is ours when we feel that obedience is growing easier to us, and that we have fixed in our characters some small likeness to him. As we go on we find that the things that once seemed of such absorbing interest to us that we could not conceive that we could ever do without them, have lost their attractiveness; we sacrifice them, we say, and yet it now hardly seems a sacrifice. We find the self-limitation that we thought was going to be so hard as we watched it from a distance and felt that the time was coming when it must be made, a simple and natural thing to do. We find that we can do without a great many things because we possess the one thing; and we begin to understand the once mysterious mer-

chantman who sold all he had for a single flawless pearl. It was such a wonderful thing—the pearl. And now we have it too, and all else is nothing.

“We gather violets because the skies
Are far beyond our reach; but if a star
Came down to us with sweet fire over-brimmed,
We might forget the simple violets.”

“These things are too great for us and overwhelm us. Great saints may live in the thought of their union with our blessed Lord; but we, just ordinary folk, are not able to do that. I feel at moments as though I were lifted to some mount of vision and caught a distant glimpse of that life, but I am soon down in the valley once more where the mists hang, and I cannot see the mountain, still less the vision.” Ah! But the significant thing is that you have seen it once. Once the traveller on the mountain peak sees the mists of the valley break and the sun strike upon the fields where lies his journey’s end, the mists may close as they will, and the night may fall and the storm break, but he is not troubled, because what he has seen, thought it be but once, he knows is there and awaits him. And if in your intensest moments of prayer and communion the sense of the nearness of our Lord and of your communion with him comes to you, it is not rendered doubtful by the fact that other moments come in which you miss the vision. It is a reality, though

the clouds mostly hide it. And if you are true to it, they will hide it less and less as life goes on. For, all unperceived, our Lord is uniting himself closer and closer to the soul that wills to have him, and the hour will come when his presence will be known by the mastery that he has gained over your life. After long, and as it seems, fruitless struggle, that will one day come to you as the breaking of dreams. You will awake, and it will be to find yourself after his likeness and you will be satisfied.

THE ELEVENTH MEDITATION

THE ELEVENTH MEDITATION

BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY

Let us listen to the words of the prophet —

BEHOLD, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Let us picture —

Isaiah the prophet before King Ahaz. The king has just made his final choice—the choice to rely on earthly power rather than on the power of the Lord God. He declines even to ask for a sign that shall certify the words of the prophet. As between confiding himself and his kingdom to God or to statecraft, he will have statecraft. He will trust to his carefully planned alliances. They rest on a comprehensible basis of facts; what Isaiah asks him

is to play the part of a religious enthusiast. They are in striking contrast, these two men, as they stand there at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field. One represents the wisdom that is the outcome of a careful study of the political situation; the other the wisdom that rests on divine vision. Isaiah is all eagerness, urging Ahaz to risk all on an act of faith. "It is God's kingdom and you are God's representative," he seems to say. "Throw yourself in complete faith on God and he will rescue you; ask a sign that shall prove the truth of my words." We see the smile of contempt on the lips of Ahaz, the smile of the man who despises religious enthusiasm. "I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord." Isaiah turns away; he forgets Ahaz and his eyes look out into the far future. He turns from the man who will not be a deliverer to the Deliverer whom the Lord himself shall raise up to rescue Israel. "The virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." It will come in the far future, but it will come. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

Consider, first —

That this contrast, so vivid here, is permanent. Humanity groups itself on one or the other side of this line that separates Ahaz and Isaiah. On this side, all the keen, cautious men of limited view, who guide themselves by the dictates of merely human probabilities; who walk by sight, not faith. On that side, are the men of faith, eager, enthusiastic, fanatical, who will risk all in reliance on what they believe to be the will of God. To the one to risk the issues of life on conduct guided by alleged revelations and miracles is the wildest superstition; to the other it is the highest sanity. To the one, the words of Christ are to be judged, and accepted or rejected, as they seem to embody a workable theory of life not because of any supernatural origin or mission that may be ascribed to the author. To the other, it is precisely his supernatural origin and mission that give his words their meaning and force. To the one, the virgin birth of Christ is a difficulty that must be overcome or set aside before they can accept his teaching; to the other, it is a light that illumines all his utterances and lets us see his secret.

Consider, second —

That we are committed to such action as arises out of supernatural facts. We believe in an Incar-

nate God born of a virgin mother. We are Christians, not in spite of the virgin birth, the difficulties of which we manage to get along with or avoid in some way, but because of that birth which is the very corner-stone of our faith. We believe, not because our Lord's teaching approves itself to the dictates of human reason, but because it makes known to us the mind of God and declares his will. God who thus manifests his love in giving himself for us commands our allegiance and love in a way that a mere appeal to reason could not do. So we come to kneel before the child Jesus as he rests in the arms of his Holy Mother, finding in him the realisation of the words of the prophet,—His name shall be called Immanuel—God with us.

Let us pray, then —

For willingness of faith in accepting all the revelation of God. Pray for the readiness of St. Mary: "Be it unto me according to thy word."

Grant, O Lord, we beseech thee, to thy people an inviolable firmness of faith; that as we confess thine Only Begotten Son, the everlasting partaker of thy glory, to have been born in our very flesh, of the Virgin Mother, they may be delivered from present adversities, and admitted into the joys that shall abide; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

The child-bearing of Mary is a subject to be approached with a certain reticence. There are themes of which silence is the best method of treatment. And here there would seem to be small need of discussion because the evidence that we have to go upon is of necessity such as cannot be tested by any of the ordinary methods of testing evidence. We have the story of the Annunciation and its attendant circumstances in the Gospel. Whether we put them aside as incredible or accept them with all their implications, will depend upon, not the evidence for their truth, but on our general attitude toward the preceding facts of the Creed. I suppose that any one who can say the Creed up to this point will have no difficulty in going on. The fact of the Virgin Birth will hardly be a stumbling block to any one who believes in the Incarnation.

Into the relation of the Holy Mother and the Divine Child we will not presume to enter. The relations of any mother and any child are too sacred for that. One feels that here one may best follow the wise reticence of the Scriptures. Only we may emphasise the unbounded love that made the relation of Jesus and Mary one of unbroken joy. What must that nearness and intimacy of God's presence have meant of joy and peace during all the months of the child-bearing and years of the infancy before the shadow of the cross fell

upon her. In our own broken experience, we do know moments when the communion of our souls with the present God fills us with peace and joy and confidence. We seem for the moment to have surmounted the ordinary obstacles to communion and to have passed almost to the state of vision. Our Lord makes his presence evident to us and we eagerly speak with him. Thus we feel, as the apostles felt on the Mount of Transfiguration, the pleading desire to stay the hurrying moments and to hold the Presence yet a little longer. There are hours when our hearts burn within us with some subtle, mysterious warmth; moments whose joy of possession is shadowed by the sense of coming separation, and we cling to our Lord and beg that he will abide with us yet a while. We cannot but feel that these moments are but faulty interpretations of the sustained joy of Mary, between whose pure soul and communion with the present God there was no bar. Let it be that she was far from understanding the full significance of her Child; still the very mystery that surrounded his conception would have been constantly suggestive of the wonderful favour of God. The Holy Spirit that came upon her did not leave her; but there would be his indwelling and stimulating and hallowed presence too:—"Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women." If we

have thought our way into the heart of those words we have caught some faint notion of the joy that they implied for the Blessed Mother. If when we ourselves have received our Blessed Lord in the Mystery of the Altar we have become conscious of his Presence, though but for a moment, we have known something of the intimacy of the relation of Mary and our Lord.

And all the while, not very far in the background of this mystery of joy and communion, there is that other great mystery, the mystery of suffering. I have not much sympathy with the thought of those who would have us believe that Mary was spared the pain of child-bearing. Pain, whatever its ultimate meaning, is so intimately knit up with love, especially with the love of those to whom with any reality we give ourselves, that it seems a part of the love itself. One feels it difficult to conceive love without the background of pain and sacrifice. There is, indeed, an intensification of the love when we have to sacrifice ourselves for it, when we find in it the call and opportunity for sacrifice. Our notions of pain are all wrong because we so habitually read it in terms of resentment and unwillingness. But there is pain that we voluntarily accept—as our Lord accepted the pain of the Cross—a pain that is brimming with blessing and without which we should feel our life all the weaker in

power. Such was the pain of Calvary, such is the pain of all who are very near God. Clearer spiritual insight, deeper penetration into life, means increased capacity for suffering. So the sword went through the heart of Mary just because God had brought her so near to himself.

Pain is the enrichment of life; to be without it would be to be without much of joy, too. There are things in the world about us that we think we might well dispense with because we are ignorant of their office and judge them from a narrowly personal point of view. There is nothing that seems more useless, more mere annoyance, than dust—the dust that blows about our streets, the soot that rises from chimneys, the barren sand-storm that sweeps across the desert. But without dust we should be without the pleasant showers that refresh the earth; the condensation of water in the air requires the presence of immense numbers of dust particles about which to condense. Without these it would only condense at a lower temperature and we should live in an atmosphere of moisture with a different earth. The deep blue of the sky, which is one of the constant joys of our life, the glow of the sunset sky, when all the west is lit with orange and red and gold, the blue haze that wraps the mountains—all these exist because of the presence of atmospheric dust. Without it

there would be no twilight, no afterglow, no glory of the evening sky. It is so in life—take out the hard things that we fret against, and there would go with them many of the beauties and joys of life itself; it would be the poorer, the less worth living; there would go much of its tenderness, its sympathy, its power of sacrifice, its ecstasy of self-surrender. In another world, where there will be no more pain, its office will doubtless be supplied by something other; but here it is a form of our ministry, an added glory to our vocation, that we can suffer for and with God and each other. Mazzini said: “The highest call that comes to a young man is, ‘Come and suffer.’”

If sorrow falls
Take comfort still in deeming there may be
A way to peace on earth by woes of ours.

The method that God chose of uniting himself with humanity, the method of Nazareth and Bethlehem, may give us insight to this work of God. He hath chosen the weak things of the world. It is the weakness of the Incarnation that has astonished and scandalised the world. Men have strange notions of the way in which it was becoming that God should work; they are continually looking for the spectacular from him: “Behold, I thought he would come forth and call upon the name of his God and strike his hand on the place and recover

the leper." But that was not the method at all. The Jew, notwithstanding all the teaching of the prophets, had arrived at a spectacular notion of the coming of Messiah, and it was a rock of offence that he came from despised Galilee. A Messiah at the head of irresistible armies, shattering all the powers of the world, was conceivable; but a crucified Messiah! In the narratives of the Temptation Satan is displayed with the same notion:—Cast thyself down—receive kingdoms. The work of God men would have in dramatic setting. The same notion haunts modern thought. How often do we meet in anti-Christian writing the notion of the importance of man and of Christianity treated with contempt on the ground of the insignificance of the earth. That God should be conceived to care particularly for so small a planet—of so small a solar system is incredible. The inference we are left to make is that if God could be conceived to interfere at all in the affairs of the universe, he would at least have chosen a large star. But some one has pertinently asked: "How large ought a planet to be in order that we may conceive it to be interesting to God?" Of course there is a hopeless confusion of values here. But it marks the human astonishment at God's choice of the weak rather than the strong. But in all his working there is a hiding of his power. He does not compel men or

overwhelm them. What more striking display of this than the Sacraments? Where will you find less apparent adaptation of means to end? Think of a baptism. It is usually not a very inspiring scene—the pouring of a little water on a baby's head, with the accompaniment of a few words, seems of little significance; and then the priest pronounces astonishing words: "Seeing that this child is regenerate and grafted into the Body of Christ's Church." A priest speaks a few words over bread and wine and then comes to you and says: "The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ—the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ." We can understand the incredulous wonder of men. But that is the method of God. That is his method even in the birth of Jesus. This helpless baby in his manger-cradle is the Lord of heaven and earth. All our hope here and ever hangs on him. We watch him later when he has passed through the ordinary stages of human growth and experience, entering on his ministry, teaching the crowds, submitting to rejection and scorn and insult and death. It is still the method of weakness—there is still a hiding of his power. We watch the history of his Church and it is still the method of drawing men by love and sympathy and the spirit of weakness. We feel sure of the fidelity of the Church to its Master and Head as we watch it threading the times of persecution,

accepting suffering and insult and death as its normal lot; we begin to have doubts of the Church precisely in those periods in which it becomes triumphant and takes to itself the wrappings of royalty and puts its foot on the neck of kings. We find then that whatever its apparent strength and success, it is a failure in its essential mission to present to men the winning character of Jesus of Nazareth, the meek and lowly.

And if we have grasped the divine method we feel that profound truth that St. Paul enunciates: "When I am weak, then am I strong." The character that embodies the Christ-ideal is the strongest character that humanity knows. St. Francis is the strongest character of the Middle Ages. The saints are the strongest men and women of our race. They have found the secret of the life that has the widest contact with the universe—the life that is hid with Christ in God. They are strong because they have found the secret of the life of Jesus; that strength is not compulsive power but sympathetic love which willingly gives itself for others. Napoleon said: "I can gain but a wavering influence over the men whose eyes and ears I can catch. This Man—vanished for eighteen centuries—still holds the characters of men as in a vise." But the point is that he had not vanished—but that he lives and perpetually reproduces the

qualities of his character in his followers. He would have been forgotten had it not been for that. As the mere history of a life, Christianity would have been of no worth. It lives by the constant reproduction of a life. Because Christ is formed in his saints to the extent of their capacity to reproduce him, Christianity lives. It lives not by its doctrinal tradition, but by its character tradition. This is the ground of its persistence, the secret of its ever renewing strength.

The ability of the Church to meet the demands of its mission is its ability to produce men who learn from it the secret of Jesus. When it ceases to make the production of such men and women its chief aim it shows itself as a conspicuous failure. And inasmuch as the Church is so largely submitted to human conditions, even as its Incarnate Lord was, it is constantly swaying from its ideal, as he never did. We show a constant tendency to fall back on the methods of worldly strength. We trust to organizations, and demand that bishops and clergy shall be "good business men with organizing ability." We ask for wealth and cultivate the rich man, yielding him whatsoever influence he likes to claim in the conduct of the parish and the legislation of the Church. We multiply all the machinery and business methods of a wealthy corporation rather than the machinery for the making of saints.

Parishes are spoken of as "active" and "wide-awake," when we mean that they are multiplying guilds and institutional work. Provided they do that, the authorities, lay and clerical, apparently are indifferent whether people are led to the Sacraments—whether the Bread of God is offered his children more than once a month. Our "talk is of oxen," what wonder that the Church makes money rather than saints!

There is that in human life that requires opposition and hardness to rouse it to effort. Stagnation is easy for it. But there is that power and spirit within man which, if it can be called forth, will overcome all obstacles. What shall arouse us? Ought it not to be the opposition of the world, rather than the yielding of the world? Ought it not to be the appeal of the world's needs, rather than the smile of the world's favour? It is so hard to be saints, we sigh, in the environment of a nineteenth century life. But is that not just the stimulus that we need—the very difficulty? Far up the mountain side the water runs from the spring, and under the stress of gravity takes its way down the slope. As it goes it gathers to itself the water of other springs and at last flows out through the plain, a mighty river. In its advance it follows the line of the least resistance; it avoids this rock that blocks its pathway; it skirts that mountain chain

that looks impregnable; it cuts its way through the soft earth in no matter what direction it may lead it. But though it seeks thus the easiest way, it has abundant strength to overcome the most difficult. There, where no other course was open to it, it has broken through the mountain chain; here, it has dashed over the precipice and eaten its way far into the solid rock. If it may, it languidly seeks the primrose path; but, if need be, it gathers all its strength and dashes the rock in pieces. It is so in human life—in your life and mine. We naturally seek the easy, the smooth, the pleasant; but there is that within us to enable us to overcome all difficult situations, too. But in us, it should not be, as in the mountain stream, the choice of necessity, but of desirability. Our lives should kindle under the touch of the heavenly vision; glimpsed from our lowliness, the possibility of sanctity should fascinate us. The feeling of its difficulty should dissolve before the certainty of the divine strength. The wonderful power of sanctity lies in the perfection of its self-surrender to the strength of God; the self-surrender that enabled Mary of Nazareth to meet the sword of her earthly life: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word."

The strength of the Blessed Virgin was just the strength of her utter submission to God's will which

she meets without resistance, only with humble wonder. One feels that out of her purity and faith she could have said nothing else. Any one who depended less on God might have failed. In her we feel no hesitancy, no sharp crisis of decision. She meets without faltering the reproach of her child-bearing, the perplexities and trials of her future life, the mystery of her Son's conduct, the grief of the Cross at the end. There is something in this life that compels the admiration of even the unsympathetic. What glorious living! What superb strength! Sanctity has a strange fascination even for those who do not understand it. The world stirs uneasily in the presence of the divine ideal of life, perhaps because it feels, however dimly, that the ideal was meant for it, too.

"Hail, thou that art highly favoured," the angel said. We are sometimes inclined to view special revelations from the point of view of demands made by God on our lives. We think of the labours, the sacrifice that is involved in an answer to a call of God. We soon begin to think that there must be something due us because of the immensity of the loss that we have suffered in following the call of our Lord—some compensation for our self-sacrificing fidelity. "Behold, we have left all and followed thee, what shall we have therefore?" Would it not be much better to think of the high

privilege that it is to be called of God to any life or any work? It fills one with mingled Joy and awe to feel that one is where one is to-day, because there came a voice of God to one that changed one's whole life. Here was a simple virgin living a quiet life in an inconspicuous village, and lo! an angel came and she is exalted to be the Mother of Incarnate God! A demand of God—yes, but a trust of God, too. A self-committal of God to Mary. For years she shall have charge of this Child. He shall gain his human experience through her. He shall be obedient to her will and responsive to her love. Through him she is given all the deepest joys of motherhood. The sacrifices she is later called to endure flow out of the very fulness and richness of their mutual love. Within the very shadow of Calvary there is a light—the light of the still remembered human relation: "Woman, behold thy son."

And is not the essence of any revelation of God's will, not that God makes demands upon us, but that he puts his cause in our hands—he trusts us? It is God's vocation that finds the life which otherwise would be meaningless and insignificant, and trusts it with work to do. It is merely sinful to dwell on the difficulty, the sacrifice, of the work; to think of the earthly relations and earthly gains we are called away from. St. Matthew might have led a prosperous and contented life at the receipt of customs,

but there was more life, life richer and fuller, in the Apostolate that he was called to, even though it was "with persecutions." St. James and St. John could, no doubt, have been happy enough in their work as fishermen on the Lake of Galilee, but then they could never have been taken up in an high mountain to see a vision of another world—to see the light of heaven spread over the face of the Master as he stood before them in raiment white and glistening. The long years of waiting in Ephesus and the sword of the executioner, were little to exchange for that. So the limitations of our lives on their human side, the sacrifice of this relationship or of that pleasure,—what are these that we should for a moment weigh them in the balance against a mission to perform for God?

It transfigures all our work to approach it as a part of our Christian vocation, as a thing to be done with a sense of obligation to him who has committed it to us, as the means through which we can appeal to him. "In a world which is ever moving physically and morally, the one entirely sacrilegious thing is to stand still," and to stand still spiritually, more than all else. The nature of the work that he gives us is not of much consequence; what is of consequence is, that he gives it. Carlyle says somewhere: "I call a man remarkable who becomes a true workman in the vineyard of the

Highest. Be his work that of palace-building and kingdom-founding, or only of delving and ditching, to me it is no matter—or next to none. All human work is transitory, small in itself, contemptible. Only the worker thereof, and the Spirit that dwelt in him, is significant.”

Once more; the quality that, humanly speaking, fitted St. Mary for her vocation was not great capacity of any kind, but her purity and singleness of heart. These are the faculties of life that count spiritually because they involve the readiness to respond freely to the presence of God. It is true of many lives to which God would come with healing presence and satisfying vocation that they are like the inn of Bethlehem, crowded. I have read somewhere of an ancient monastery which had been secularised and turned into an inn. All day long and far into the night in the room that had been the refectory of the monastery where the monks had eaten their poor meals in silence as they listened to the reading of the Word of God, there was now a constant bustle of men coming and going; the rattle of glasses, the careless and often coarse talk of the frequenters—at times the singing and the oaths of men far gone in drink. On the walls the faded frescoes of the life and work of our Lord and his saints, which no man had troubled to obliterate, stood in silent protest and looked down on the dis-

heartening scene. Our Lord comes and looks into many a life with a look that is full of invitation, but in its feverish eagerness to snatch the pleasures or gain of the day, it never raises its eyes from the earth, nor sees his presence. Are there not many doors to which an angel comes from standing in the presence of God with its "Hail" upon its lips, only to find the door closed? Is it not certain that at some time the angel stands at the door of every life ready to deliver a message from God?

THE TWELFTH MEDITATION

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SUFFERED UNDER PONTIUS PILATE,
WAS CRUCIFIED

Let us listen to the words of Isaiah—

BUT he was wounded for our transgressions,
he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

Let us picture—

This sufferer, as he appears to the vision of the prophet Isaiah. It is in wonderful contrast, this, with that other vision of his, the vision of the child who was also God, Immanuel. Now the form that he sees is that of a prophet like himself; one who has unselfishly given himself to the service of his people in answer to a divine call. Like every mes-

senger of God who dares to proclaim divine truth to a people sunk in iniquity, he must suffer at the hands of those to whom his message is a reproach and against whom it is an indictment. But there is an unique character in this sufferer of Isaiah's vision. He is not merely the messenger sent from God and representing him; he is at the same time so completely identified with the people that he represents them. He is the embodiment of his nation toward God, and the messenger of God toward Israel. So perfect is his self-identification with his nation that they are summed up in him, and he can bear the burden and the pain of their sins. They are so one that if he suffers for them they also suffer in him. So we see him, pathetically pleading with them, and going forth to his death consciously as their representative to bear the doom of their sin; but coming forth from the discipline of death with the power to offer anew to others the salvation that they had hitherto scorned.

Consider, first —

That the marks of revelation rest on this picture of God's dealing. No human reason could have imagined this solitary sufferer as the method of Israel's redemption, still less as the redemption of the world. The conquering king that ultimately did fill Israel's imagination of the future is the more

natural thought. But it is not God's thought. It is our thought because we do not sufficiently realise the effect of sin upon the relation of man and God. Humanity will not take its sins seriously. It contents itself with thoughts of a law violated, a purely exterior notion; it finds difficulty in rising to the notion of a relation broken, a much more serious matter. To forgive one for the offense against a law were an easy matter; to restore a relation of love that has been broken off is much more serious. To get back to God implies not simply a promise of new obedience; the turning from a past that may now be forgotten in the confidence with which we look forward to the future; it means the undoing of the evil that the past has done to ourselves, by the healing of the spiritual wounds from which we are suffering, and the restoration of the soul that has broken from the divine communion to its original relation to God. This is something that an act of amnesty, which is all that the average man conceives necessary in dealing with sin, could by no means accomplish. It could only be accomplished by the renewal, the reintegration, of the spiritual nature of man which was so far shattered by the fact of sin that it was incapable of accomplishing any renewal for itself. All man could do was to suffer for his sin, accept its penalty; God alone could renew. So God must come to man.

Consider, second —

There must needs be two stages, so to say, in this process of the restoration of the human into communion with the divine. There is the broad act by which redemption is won for all. God willeth all men to be saved. And there is the personal act by which this general salvation becomes a part of the experience of the individual. Our Lord redeems man; but the individual man must manage to appropriate this salvation to himself. Punishment will not do it, suffering will not do it; hence the futility of certain notions of future punishment as though man must be released when he has suffered and been punished enough. The only thing that will restore the lost friendship of God is the renewal of our spiritual integrity so that there may be renewed harmony between us. Consider, that in your personal case, if your religion has had any effect, it has meant your spiritual renewal—your reinstatement as the child of God. How far has this gone on in your experience? Do you find your relations with God growing, if one may put it in that way, more friendly and more confidential? Is the sense of the constant presence of God growing? Do you find it easier to refer all your life to him? Are spiritual activities becoming the natural modes of your self-expression I think that it is along such lines that we are to look for true progress.

We are so apt to look for it in the exterior field of the accomplishment of routine, rather than in the interior field of conformity of will and realised communion. Does God become more and more plain to me as a part of daily experience? Do I find it easier to refer my whole life to him as my Saviour and friend?

So let us pray —

That we may appropriate to ourselves more the fruits of our Lord's atonement; that we may grow in the friendship of God.

O Christ, the Son of God, whom God the Father gave up for all, when he received thee as a true sacrifice for us; receive the desires of thy people; save those whom thou hast redeemed; give life to those whom thou hast delivered; and grant that, through thee, whom we believe to have been crucified for all, we may have remission of sins in this life, and everlasting joy in the life to come. Through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord.

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If we study our Bible faithfully we notice that, as the gradual unfolding of the revelation that is contained in it goes on, certain elements that are involved in the relation of God to man are becoming more complete and are being outlined with greater clearness. The notion of sin, in particular,

gradually passes beyond the conception of it as a tribal or national offence, to a stage in which it has become individualised as an offence disruptive of the personal relation of the soul to God. Individual dependence on God's will and responsibility to God is accentuated with a sharpness that admits of no blurring of the sense of personal sin. God's attitude toward sin is depicted with a clearness that leaves nothing to the imagination; it is characterised with all the frank anthropomorphism of the Old Testament, in language that it is not possible to mistake, as burning anger. There is no question any longer of a shifted and divided responsibility; the soul must stand out naked and unsheltered to receive its sentence:—"The soul that sinneth, it shall die."

And in the second place, that thought of a divine intervention for the deliverance of man from the power and consequences of sin, which is the substance of the hope that underlies the primitive stories of man's life on the earth, and charges them with a buoyant optimism, so that in some stories—as those of Eden and the Deluge—the ending is not in the darkness of hopeless catastrophe, but in the setting sun breaking through the clouds and changing their blackness to masses of royal purple emblazoned with golden bars—becomes as the story goes on, cut out, as to its outline, in sharper defini-

tion. The interest of God, if one may so express it, grows more intense, his intervention more certain, his immanence in human history more keenly felt. The intervention of God in human history comes to be read, not in terms of the poetic imagination, as in the Genesis stories; not in terms of exceptional deliverance, as in the Book of Judges; but as a steady pressure on the whole national life and fortunes of Israel. A pressure, too, it become clearer as we go on, which is exercised from within upon the spiritual faculties of man, giving rise in Israel to the phenomenon of prophecy. Israel's life is being stimulated and forced up by the dynamic action of the prophets' preaching, till it reaches the level of spiritual capacity from which it can be led on from the thought of a general interest of God in its life, to the more precise thought of God's intervention through a personal deliverer. It is a great step in advance when we are enabled to see Israel as the vantage ground from which God will act, through the man of his choice, upon all the nations of the world. From the conception of deliverance we have passed to the conception of a Deliverer, who shall be the perfect representative of God. From the conception of deliverance we have advanced to a conception of a deliverance through Israel which shall affect all the nations of the world.

And in the third place, we get lights cast here and there, upon the character of the Deliverer. He is portrayed, certainly, in terms of Israelite nationality; but he tends to transcend those terms. His career is many-sided, but his character is uniform in this, at least, that he is the faithful representative of God. We should naturally expect that the sense of his power would be stressed and his future glory exalted, and so it is; but at the same time there is another line of thought concerning him. As through the triumphant harmonies of an overture there steals at times a motif that is premonitory of pain and sorrow, so through all the glorious vision of the Messianic Kingdom—the triumph of its King—there steals the motif of suffering telling of some dim agony to be undergone—some thorn-laced path to be trodden, before the Deliverer can enter into his glory. The sense of spiritual combat that weeps and supplicates throughout the Psalter, becomes incarnate in the desolate sufferer of the twenty-second Psalm, clinging to his trust in God amid the roaring of the lions and the trampling of the oxen, confident still of his mission to proclaim God's Name unto his brethren. Across the sun-flushed vision of Isaiah, streaming with the light of coming victory, there drifts the shadow of the suffering Prophet who gathers Israel's sins into his bosom to take them with him to the place of sacrifice. And

then we stand silent before the final mystery—the mystery of deliverance through a sacrifice:—"It pleased the Lord to bruise him, he hath put him to grief; when his soul shall make an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." It was centuries after that the words spoken on the road to a Judean village illumined all the prophets' pages:—"O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken; ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?"

Of all the teachings of the Christian Scriptures none has proved a harder saying than this that we call the doctrine of the atonement. Endless, and of extreme bitterness, have been the denunciations of it; endless, and of extreme ingenuity, the explanations offered. We are as helpless before the ultimate ground of it as before the mystery of pain. But may I point out that in either case the ultimate ground is not a matter that concerns the conduct of human life. To seek the ultimate ground of the Atonement is the natural impulse of the speculator's mind. Practical religion seeks to know so much as shall afford a rational basis for conduct. Why our deliverance from sin required the death of the Son of God need not in any wise concern us.

The Biblical revelation represents man as separ-

ated from God by the fact of his sin. Sin destroys the harmony that should naturally be between the creature and his maker. Essentially, sin is the deflection of the will of man from the will of God, resulting in action contrary to the will of God and injury to man's spiritual nature. This fact of sin, however, is not exclusive matter of Revelation. The religious consciousness of man as exhibited in the religions of the world, with all their varying forms of propitiatory action, tell the same story. And that it is a true story, each of us can bear witness, having the evidence within us in the voice of conscience. Man could not free himself from the sense of sin. It remained for God to take the initiative and provide the way.

The way provided was the life and death of Jesus Christ. In regard to this certain things seem to be absolutely plain. But in the first place we must free ourselves from any lingering remains of a commercial theory of the Atonement. The Atonement was not a price paid to anybody as in full settlement for the injury done to God by sin. It was not a punishment exacted for sin, which if it could not be exacted from man himself, was accepted from some one else, as the equivalent. It was not the satisfaction of the vengeance of an angry God, as the secularist books represented. It was not the substitution of one victim for another,

a more valuable for a less valuable. The solution of the difficulty is to be sought in quite another direction. It is to be sought and found in the love of the Father for his children—a love which becomes incarnate, when God himself, in the Person of his Son, the Second Person of the Ever-Blessed Trinity, assumes the servant form and himself comes to man's assistance. There is no separation of will between the Father and the Son, they are simply expressing the harmonious will of the Trinity to rescue man.

Now, I do not know, I do not think it in the least matters what I do not and cannot know, whether this was the only way to save man, or why in the wisdom of God this was the way chosen. To dwell on that seems to me the most barren of speculation; and to raise my ignorance into a bar to the acceptance of the fact itself, would seem to me the crudest sort of human pride. What I am assured of, is, that I, in common with the rest of humanity, must be delivered from sin and that the life and death of Jesus is the method employed by God for that deliverance. I do know that "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, to the end that all that believe on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." I do know that "God sent his Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be

saved." And that is all the doctrine of the Atonement that I find any need for.

The method that God chose, then, is the method of identification with man. He took human nature—he lived a human life, and died a human death. He was made in all points like as we are, yet without sin. He exhibited, that is, the divine ideal of human life. He lived a life that from beginning to end was a life of obedience. Therein was the meaning of his sacrifice and of his acceptance with God. He was obedient to all the conditions of human life, he was obedient to all the thought of God for human life, he was obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. This obedience was not a merely formal obedience, but an obedience that he learned under human conditions:—"He learned obedience through the things that he suffered,"—and because of this obedience "God also hath highly exalted him" as to his humanity, "and hath given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."

Here then are three things: the pitiful and helpless sin of man who had by the experience of unnumbered centuries learned that he could by no

efforts of his own free himself from the servitude of sin and gain peace in his conscience and with God; the ineffable love of the Blessed Trinity expressing itself in the Incarnation of God the Son; and the method of that love revealed in the self-sacrifice of a human life and death. He willed to meet us under complete human conditions, and those conditions meant sacrifice and suffering.

The instinct of humanity has always recognized that its highest capacity is its capacity to love; and that the completest expression of this love is found in self-sacrifice for the good of others. It has remained for modern times, I think, to deny that; but it is safe to say that the denial will never find many sympathisers. The conviction is too deeply rooted—it runs upward from the earliest folk-tales to the highest philosophical and religious embodiments. It is of the very essence of the hero in all times and places, that he is heroic for others and not for himself. When the question is raised, whether a world is well made in which one man is called to sacrifice himself for others, the answer is, that while we know nothing of the possible advantages of worlds made otherwise, we know that in a world made as ours is, in the possibility of sacrifice lies the completest expression of love. It is through sacrificing love that we find the possibility of identifying our lives with the lives of others. As our

common saying expresses it,—we share their fortunes. That is what our Lord did for us—he shared our fortunes. He so identified himself with us, that he not only shared our fortunes, but he made it possible for us to share his.

In that, we reach the understanding of the efficacy of the Atonement for the individual Christian. If we may so express it, the Atonement that the Son of God accomplished by his life and death, of which the summing up and highest symbol is the Cross, was still outside man and only ideally effective. The world was potentially redeemed; there was need of further action before any single soul received the results of the Redemption made. We learn of the action of Jesus Christ and then we say: How can that profit me? How can I become a partaker of the benefits of His death? Is it by faith? Shall I find the Cross of Christ available for me if I believe with an intense faith in him? Is my hope that he will shelter me under the “robe of his righteousness”? Or will his example stimulate me to good works and an ethical life so that I shall be found acceptable to God?

Let us take up once more the thought that we have been trying to keep before our minds all through these studies of the Creed, the thought that we have found fundamental wherever we have touched the relation of God to man, the thought

that that relation could not consist in a relation of will or of external influence, but that it became an intelligible relation only in the light of the Incarnation which revealed God's purpose to unite himself with man and to raise man to be "in God." The process of redemption and renewal is not complete for the individual till he is "in God,"—till, in his case, the Incarnation has become effective and he is in union with God. The process of the renewal of the human soul is therefore not an artificial, dramatic, judicial process, as the result of which a person unchanged is treated as though some change had been wrought in him because of the work of Christ; but a real process by which the soul that comes to our Lord seeking to be made partaker of his Atonement is actually taken into the Body of the Incarnation, and cleansed from sin—is put in vital contact with the source of life. His being in Christ is the ground of the process of his sanctification.

This becomes a little plainer, perhaps, if we follow the course of what actually does happen in the Christian life under normal conditions. The first stage of that life is that effected in the Sacrament of Baptism; the child is brought to God in the sacrament, and what happens? The child is regenerate and taken into the Body of Christ and made a partaker of the divine nature. The place of faith

in the transaction is that the action itself is instigated by faith in the promise of God. But the full account of the matter is not that the child is accepted because we believe, or because anybody believes, but because a supernatural transaction has taken place by virtue of which this child has become a new creature—is now in Christ and partaker of eternal life—Christ's life. This relation of union normally deepens with the child's growth, in later years, in Christian experience, and shows its actuality by the production of the fruits of the Spirit. But should the child, having grown to years of discretion, sin, then the relation of union between it and its Saviour is injured, and perhaps broken. But the injured relation is capable of reintegration. The love of God has provided for a future application of the Atonement to the sinful soul. In the Sacraemnt of Penance the repentance of the sinner is answered by its restoration to the state of union by a fresh impartation of the Incarnate Life to the soul. Here again the transaction is one of renewal and impartation. The soul is cleansed, not by judicial sentence, but by vital contact. And throughout the life of the Christian its spiritual life is sustained and deepened and invigorated by the same vital contact in its participation in the life of Christ, by the reception of the living Jesus in the Sacrament of the Altar. That

sacrament again, is not a pledge to faith, or an act of religious obedience, or the expression of our Church membership, but a real reception of Incarnate God, whereby we dwell in him and he in us. From this point of view the sacraments lose their external and artificial character (a view of them, as we may say in passing, which explains how men can think of them as "observances" which may be dispensed with or infrequently conformed to, at Easter, for example), and are seen to be the very ground and sustenance of the normal Christian life, perpetually needed as being the permanent channels for the renewal of the spiritual vitality which is being constantly exhausted by the struggle of life.

Let us push our thought one stage further. By virtue of our union with our Lord, become possible through the position that he, by his self-sacrificing life and perfect obedience, has acquired as the new Head of humanity, we have become, by becoming Christians, members not only of him, but of all others who are in him; that is, of one another. Such is the solidarity of the Body of Christ, that the members become dependent on one another; if one member rejoice, all rejoice with it; if one suffer, all suffer in its suffering. And just as the Incarnation of the Son of God is a permanent and, in a sense, constantly extending fact, as the life of Christ is constantly being extended in the new

members that are regenerated in him and incorporated in his Body, so that his Body undergoes a very real growth in the growth of the Church; so we may say of the Atonement that it undergoes a certain extension in the experience of the mystical Body.

There is in the Body, a community of pain; the members not only suffer with one another, but for one another, and in this also Christ suffers. They make up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ, and in all their afflictions he is afflicted. We think of the case of the martyr, for example; the whole Church suffers with him. The story of a Hannington or a Patterson sends a thrill of pain through the whole Church, as the injured nerve sends a thrill of pain through the whole of our body. And the martyr suffers on our behalf, as our representative, as the embodiment of the mission of the Church. And in what we think of as secular things; in the sins, the pains, the failures that mark the progress of the life of the Church, no one member is unconcerned. It is the Body of Christ that suffers when the child drifts into a life of sin, when the young girl "goes wrong," as we say in our veiled phrases, when the strength of a man gives way before a temptation that Christian sympathy might have sustained him under. We bear our part, and rightly, of the shame and reproach, though per-

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sonally we could not help. In the deliberate offering of himself to the Church in arduous work, in self-sacrificing labour, in sustaining its work at the expense of vigorous self-limitation, in giving himself to the priesthood, the religious life, the mission field, a man is taking the Cross of Christ and abandoning self-pleasing. Christ pleased not himself. His great apostle, whom he reproached with persecuting him, was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, and we know into what life of suffering the following of it led him. And any one who limits himself by the taking of the cross on behalf of his brethren, enters into the atoning life of his Lord.

Again, there is a side of this sorrow-bearing and sin-bearing that we express by the word sympathy. Other people are disturbed by social injustice and calamity; they are disturbed about the houses of the people, and their drains, and their food. We are disturbed by these things too. But we are filled with a grief that has deeper roots than that. What greatly troubles us about the wretched condition of tens of thousands of poor folk, is not only that their condition destroys the possibility of bodily health and comfort and the joy of life, but that the conditions render spiritual living and a sense of God's love and care so very difficult. We grieve for the lives that are stunted and blighted by the evil environment in which they are compelled to

live. We grieve at the hardness of a world that will have money at the cost of ruined lives and hardened souls. We suffer in that our own lives are so involved with the society in which we live that we cannot say that we have no responsibility for its failure and sin. The sympathy that impels us to do what we may to alleviate poverty and suffering, the limitation of our powers which prevents our own best efforts for accomplishing much, and leaves us so often powerless to execute our plans and hopes, the helplessness in which we are to rescue others from sin and degradation,—all these are forms of suffering which come to us because we are in Christ and entrusted with his work. It is part of our vocation that we carry in our bodies the Dying of the Lord Jesus,

THE THIRTEENTH MEDITATION

THE THIRTEENTH MEDITATION

DEAD, AND BURIED

Let us listen to the words of the Gospel —

AND he begged the body of Jesus, and took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre.

Let us picture to ourselves —

This final scene in the earthly life of Jesus. Upon all who had been near and dear to him, hopelessness and despair have fallen. Those who might have been expected to be near him at the last are scattered by fear. The few faithful ones about the cross are too overcome by grief, by the shattering of their hopes, to be able to do anything practical. The work of his burial falls to Joseph of Aramathæa, one who had not been at all prominent in the

following of our Lord. Let us picture the sadness with which the few faithful ones receive his body from the Roman authorities and bear it away to lay it in the tomb of Joseph. One pictures the Blessed Mother, the sword now through her own heart, following the body. To her this death was not, as to so many others, the wreck of Messianic hopes; it was beside that the death of her child—the child of so many promises and so many aspirations. But there were other watchers with quite other thoughts. Imagine the interests of the Jewish authorities in the disposal of the body of Jesus. They remembered the promises of a resurrection, even if the disciples in their grief had for the moment forgotten them. They determine to see that the body is well guarded, lest what “this deceiver saith” should come to pass through the fraud of the disciples. It must have been an added grief to all the friends of our Lord that these prying intruders were ever in sight.

Consider, first —

The overwhelming disaster that the crucifixion and death of our Lord was to all who had placed their confidence in his mission. Day by day through the years of his ministry the conviction had been growing in the minds of those who were nearest to him, that this was indeed he that would de-

liver Israel. His teaching about his coming kingdom, his displays of more than human power, his mysterious character, evidently in some intimate relation to God, had produced an ever-rising tide of hope. And if in the last days, his action had chilled the enthusiasm of the multitude to a certain extent, that enthusiasm was still at its height in those who were nearest to him, and flamed up once more among the multitude on that morning when he entered Jerusalem in triumphal procession amid the hosannas of the acclaiming crowd. Then there was the mysterious failure of our Lord to make use of the enthusiasm; and disaster follows fast on disaster—the arrest, the trial, the condemnation, the crucifixion, the death. Obviously, their conception of him and his mission was mistaken, and they could hardly fail to look upon the sealed tomb as the end. Yet they must have been haunted by vague hopes of they hardly knew what. Their confidence in him was so strong that they could not but feel that there was a mistake somewhere. We picture them in the hours following going over among themselves all his words, trying to find where they had mistaken them; trying to get some new light of hope and consolation from them. They thought that this was he that should have restored the kingdom unto Israel, and they cannot quite give up the hope even in the face of its obvious failure.

Consider, second —

How often in hours of darkness we are apt to be in much the same case. The thing that we have undertaken in trust in God's guidance and protection seems to fail. And we turn back on ourselves and try to see where our mistake has been. Have we misinterpreted the leading of God? Have we blundered in attempting to carry out his will? We go over and over again with aching hearts and throbbing brains the round of facts and actions, always arriving at the same issue, the same failure, the same despair. It was so well planned and so well executed up to the very last, and then the unforeseen factor emerged and ruined all. We really could not have foreseen that. But our mistake was not in what we did, but in what we expected. Our attempt has not really failed, but we fail to see God's mind in the work. It is going on all well enough if only we will trust God a little longer. The closed tomb is not final disaster, but the path that leads to success and the vindication of the plan of God. "O fools and slow of heart!" No faithful work can fail of its success. Wait for the third morning, and God shall emerge from the tomb triumphant and all your trust in him shall be vindicated. The victory of God will be only the more complete and the more evident when he arises triumphant over death; your work will be the more

completely justified when it has at last passed through its seemingly final defeat to its joyous triumph. It is a quality of sanctity that it will not accept defeat if it knows that it is doing God's will in trust and submission. Great works have most often to pass through their period of apparent defeat before they arrive at their complete vindication.

Let us pray, then —

For the faith that will not be dismayed by defeat. Let us pray for complete trust in God.

Almighty God, who through thy only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, hast overcome death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life; we humbly beseech thee that, as by thy special grace preventing us thou dost put into our minds good desires, so by thy continual help we may bring the same to good effect, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, ever, one God, world without end.

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The followers of Jesus were unlearned and ignorant men from the point of view of the culture of the times; but when they came to set down their impressions of the death of their Master, they did it with such touching simplicity that their work abides as a supreme expression of the creative

power of love. Love has done what literary training could not have done—given us a not unworthy description of the dying of the Saviour of the world. Whatever working over of traditions may conceivably lie back of the Gospels as we to-day have them, it is inconceivable that the accounts of the dying of Jesus could have any other source than the eyes that saw him through their tears, hanging in the last agony above the heads of the hostile or indifferent crowd. The narrators used the realistic expressions of the experience of simple souls of a scene that tears their hearts and fills them with despair. We are not at all in the region of facts long meditated and thought out in relation to subsequent facts; that is the astonishing thing, that, written as they were, long after the experience of the Resurrection and the rise of a new conception of the meaning of our Lord's life and death, they show no trace of later experiences, but faithfully depict the feelings of the passing hour. There is no undertone of triumph in them, no hint that this death is to be swallowed up in victory. They render the contemporary impression of the Crucifixion with no touch of conscious artistry, but with the unconscious pathos that deep grief gives to the words of simple minds. There is nothing more wonderful in all Scriptures than this detachment from all subsequent belief and experience, and the

return to the mood which was theirs when the darkness closed over Calvary on that first Good Friday afternoon. We feel that the impressions of those hours were indelible and came back to them in the hours of vigorous and successful work, as moments of inextinguishable emotion that no subsequent experience could blur; standing out in their lives as some moment of inexpressible agony stands at times in our experience, with a pain that so absorbs us that for an instant we forget that it has passed.

As a result, we too feel, as we meditate on the Gospel stories, that we stand beneath the Cross. The scene comes to us with all the freshness of a memory. The triumphant activity of the Jewish authorities trying to cover with an appearance of gravity and decorum a too obvious expression of the sense of success; the professionalism of the bearing of the Roman soldiers, their indifference, their feeling that it is all in the day's work, varied only by the not very exciting game that determines the possession of the few poor garments; the grief of those of the followers of our Lord whose courage had been great enough to bring them to see the end, or that little group where there was no question of courage or fear of death, but of passionate devotion to Son and Master; and somewhere in the background a disgraced and tortured

Peter, weeping bitterly. Standing here we feel at the heart of things.

What is death, as we see it revealed here? If we have learned and do learn of life from the life of Jesus, may we not also learn of death from his death

The death of Jesus is the last act of his self-submission to human experience; human experience is not complete without death. He chose the human lot frankly, with all that it involved. He chose to be like us in all things, without sin, yet accepting the results of sin in its exterior effects. We think of this as being the heart of his sufferings—that he must have borne so much of contact with sin as that. For any approach or shadow of sin to the sinless is exquisite pain. We understand a little of this in a dim way. We are quite used to sin; the thought of it does not poison our lives or beget in us the sense of a loathsome presence. Still, when we analyse our experience we find that our experience of sin is limited to the experience of certain sins; these we are used to as household things. I do not mean that we never regret them or fight against them or repent of them; no doubt we do—but still that does not remove the sense of familiarity. But out beyond them there is a region of sin into which we never penetrate even in imagination, and there, strangely, is located the sense of

our hatred of sin. There are the bad sins—the sins we have not committed—the sins of strange shapes at which we shudder. We have sometimes a horror of people who commit them. This is a very real sense of the awfulness of certain sins, and if we could ever make it co-extensive with the notion of sin we should find ourselves in the attitude of a pure person who had never sinned. But in our Lord the alienation of his nature from sin was complete. He could not sin; and just because he could not, because it was so alien from his nature, he could feel its approach and presence as defilement, its results that he accepted, as pain almost intolerable. The pain of death from which he shrank, was not the pain of physical dissolution, but the touch of the last enemy, the wages of sin that he was content to accept without having earned them.

We fight against this, the instinctive horror of death, just because being sinful we fear the consequences of death. The fear of death itself we try to hide under flowers and idealise into poetry. But the consequences of death our Lord did not shrink from, for beyond death is the love of the Father into whose hands he committed himself. There, too, is our sure foundation:—"There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Death viewed, not as the necessary experience of

the sinful, but as the passing of the redeemed and pardoned soul to the condition of fuller and more perfect life, has no terror. Why should we fear the power of death? We have behind us the lives of Christians; that is, lives that have striven humbly and obediently to fulfil the will of God. They have not been perfect lives; but they have been lives expressive of a continuous purpose. They have worked, with whatever of transient failure and disaster, toward an ideal clearly seen and consciously embraced. Their failure has not been due to obstinate rebellion, but to temporary loss of power and obscurance of the ideal, from which we have recovered by the use of God's grace. Our sins have revealed to us our weakness and led us to the refuge of the penitent, the love of the Saviour. The perception of our weakness has aroused in us the sense of our dependence and led us to seek a deeper union with our Lord. We have found in his pardoning love the marvel of the sympathy of God revealed to us. But if our lives have been stained at times, they have not been unfruitful; they have been responsive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and have brought forth fruit. With such a history behind him, why should the Christian fear the issues of death? Is it not certain that the experience of our Lord's love and care that we have had hitherto will only be deepened and intensified in the

future? Is it to be supposed that the hand of the Father that has led us all our life long will be unclasped now? Is it not certain that the love which has meant so much under those imperfect conditions will not fail us then? Why fear?

As we stand by the Cross, watching the dying of Jesus, there is impressed upon us the permanency of character. Those qualities of love and sympathy and unselfish thought for others which had been so conspicuous in his life stand out here emphatically in his dying. There is that deep understanding of human nature which made it possible for him to distinguish between the surface manifestations of life and inner character; which made it impossible for him ever to indulge in the crude judgments of men which display the limitations of our knowledge and the superficialities of our understanding. He plunges deep down into the personalities of men and reads them in their reality. You remember how surprising his reading of human nature often is. He never mistakes surface enthusiasm for that deep devotion which alone is capable of the highest sacrifice. Thus he read the superficial good intentions of the rich young ruler and applied a test that revealed him to himself and sent him away sorrowing. Thus he displays the nature of his service in its hardest, most repellant aspects before the enthusiasm of a would-be disciple: "Foxes have

holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." Thus he pitilessly exposes the superficial character of St. Peter's professions of devotion: "Verily, I say unto you, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice." But the mistake of a man about himself is not always the mistake of an over-estimate of his devotion and power of sacrifice. There are times when our Lord sees under a surface sinfulness, a character of which the sin is not the complete expression. So he can pardon those who have not asked for pardon, saying: "Go, and sin no more." So he can read under the crass self-pushing and ambition of the sons of Zebedee, an inner strength of consecration to his person that will enable them to drink of his cup and to be baptised with his baptism. And so, in the crisis of the Crucifixion he can see in the cruelty and indifference of those who nail him to his cross, only the manifestation of a surface ignorance, and the inner possibility of a response to the grace of God:—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." The same quality of judgment is visible in his intercourse with the robber who hangs by his side. He detaches himself, as it were, from his own pain, to estimate this life, and perceives within it an inner love of goodness that is now coming into evidence in a vague sense of his own wickedness and need of

help. He knows that the man is still capable of response to God, and he supplies the answer to the capacity:—"To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." The first faint gleams of the dawn of penitence in the soul are perceptible to the love of Jesus.

Then, too, we see in our Lord's dying the depth and persistency of his sympathy. The breadth of his sympathy, to be sure, is the quality in his character that makes us surest of his divinity. It is an entirely wrong instinct that seizes upon our Lord's miracles as the indications of his divinity; and it is well to have our attention called to the fact that the early preaching of the Gospel made no such appeal. Read St. Paul's Epistles, if you will, and note that the appeal is not at all to the wonder-working power of our Lord. That would have been to put the appeal of Christianity in an inaccessible past, to make it dependent upon our reading of history, to have put it at the mercy of criticism. St. Paul's steady appeal is to a living, present Jesus, who is actively and sympathetically dealing with human life. "He ever liveth to make intercession for us," says the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, striking the same note. And this sympathy of our Lord, if we will consider the nature of it, is a revelation of the divine mind.

One of the limitations of human sympathy is

that it tends to be merged in mere tolerance. Men to-day talk about breadth of sympathy when their attitude is one of indifference to moral values. The saying that there is good in all men and all systems is either a platitude, or an excuse for not making any moral judgments at all. They twist the direction, "Judge not," into an axiom of moral indifference, a justification for treating moral and spiritual issues as though they did not matter. That is not the way in which our Lord interpreted by his actions his own saying about judgment. The very key to his sympathy is that it displays him as convinced that moral and spiritual issues matter tremendously in a man's life. His sympathy never takes the form of indifference to human character. His very warnings to his disciples against Pharisees and others imply the expectation of moral alertness in them, the cultivation of the capacity of spiritual discernment. It is his very sympathy with humanity which finds expression in his moral judgments of condemnation. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees!" "Go, tell that fox!" It is the very business of sympathy not only to find out the good that it may foster it, but to find out the evil that it may repress it. The fact that "God makes the sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth his rain upon the just and the unjust," is not a revelation of moral indifference on his part,

but a revelation of the long-suffering of God that leadeth men to repentance.

We must remember that what is limited in all cases is not the sympathy of God, but man's capacity to receive it. Our Lord, on his cross, shows his love and sympathy towards his Blessed Mother and St. John; there is no bar there; and he forgets his own pain at the sight of theirs. He shows his sympathy with the sinner when he opens Paradise to the penitent thief because he sees the reality of the man's repentance. But what shall we say about the unrepentant thief? Was there no love of God for him? Surely the same love that finds access to the soul of one robber, knocked at the door of the soul of the other—but knocked in vain. It is we who limit the sympathy of God. There is nothing withheld from us but that which we withhold from ourselves. We do not think of the meaning of Beethoven's sonatas, of Michael Angelo's frescoes, of the sculptures of Rodin, being withheld from a man, although the man does not see it.

So men move through a world that is resonant with the divine pleading, where God's offers touch them on every side. God wills that all men shall be saved, but the thief on the cross by his side hardens himself and joins in the jeers of the crowd. "All things are yours," St. Paul cries, as he proclaims the boundless possibilities of a life hid in

Christ, but how many of his hearers thought this offer merely pulpit rhetoric? The limitations of God's revelation and of his mercy, the limitations of Christian experience—these are not things imposed arbitrarily from without; they are my limitations and your limitations. We take in the meaning of this Man who dies on his cross so far as we will let ourselves. He is for us "one stone more," or "the Son of God"—the Saviour of our souls.

A third thing I wish to draw out from the contemplation of the dying of our Lord, is the perfectness of his trust in the Father. It never crossed his thought that the things that he suffered contained any hint of the divine displeasure towards him, nor anything more than the result of having identified himself with man under the conditions of sin. There was in Gethsemane a certain shrinking from death, but not from the will of the Father. It is nowhere implied that the faithful servant ought in justice to have life made easy for him. But there is that undertone in most of human service, that our fidelity ought to be rewarded now by freedom from the painful discipline of life. That is ill-considered. To identify ourselves with the atoning work of our Lord has as its consequence the bearing of the results of sin. It is a condition of the highest discipleship that we offer ourselves in sacrifice; and that God accepts the offer is not the

mark of his disfavour, but of love. In taking up a life of faith and service, we are taking up the cross.

It seems to me that there is no more common misapprehension of the meaning of words than is apparent in our common sayings about bearing the cross. The meaning of the Cross of Jesus is that he willingly took it. If we could conceive a moment in which he was unwilling to be crucified, we should understand that his crucifixion had no redeeming power. And that is the meaning of any cross—that it is assumed, not imposed. Our talk about bearing our cross, when we are only enduring something that we cannot help and that we would instantly be free of if we could, misses the whole point. It is no doubt a Christian virtue, to endure patiently the sufferings that we cannot help. The Apostle praises those who took patiently the spoiling of their goods. But that has nothing to do with cross-bearing. To bear a cross—to impose some limitation on one's self for the sake of Jesus—to give up that that one would fain have, and might innocently have; to undertake much that requires sacrifice; to follow a vocation when the pull of our inclinations and the pressure of our friends would lead us another way. The world is beautiful and fascinating and "the love of living" is deep in most of us; but there come to us offers from God of opportunity to serve, the acceptance of which means

self-repression—means the plucking out of the eye and the cutting off of the hand, even when they are not causes of offence. It is of the very essence of the Christian vocation that we gladly do this in some form. One does not conceive a Christian without a cross following a Master who bears one.

But all sacrifice to have any worth or acceptance, must be like Christ's, voluntary and glad. A modern French writer has well expressed this: "If a sacrifice is a sadness for you and not a joy, do not make it, you are not worthy to make it . . . if you do not feel the happiness that there is in giving yourself, let it alone,—you are not worthy to live."

In fact, you do not live in any real sense. You have detached yourself from the source of true life, and identified yourself with the perishable things. There is just that choice—the identification of yourself with the perishable or your identification of yourself with the Crucified Jesus; and the symbol of your choice is the presence or absence of the cross. That is the real character of the man, the stamp of his service. The rest of his life will be determined by his attitude to the call of Jesus. "If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross daily and follow me." *Daily*—it is the mark of the direction of the whole life. You read the reality of the response in the terms of service. Anything is to be understood not by *a priori* reasoning

about it, but by observation of its action—what does it do? This is supremely true of man. Wagner is to be understood by his operas—Browning, by his poems—Michael Angelo, by his frescoes—Gladstone, by the history of his administrations. So the Christian is to be understood by the cross he bears—the fruits of his service. From the snows and glaciers far up in the cloud-crowned mountains, ever flow out the streams that are fed by their melting. They run down the mountain side and flow out to fertilise the plains. Cities and villages live and prosper by them; the gardens clothe themselves with gorgeous blooms, and the fruits ripen, because of the existence of these distant snows. So from the inner life of the Christian, which is raised above the earth to be a life hid with Christ in God, flows out the energy that gives consecrated activity to our lives and peace to our souls.

THE FOURTEENTH MEDITATION

THE FOURTEENTH MEDITATION

HE DESCENDED INTO HELL

Let us listen to the words of St. Peter —

HE went and preached unto the spirits in prison.

Let us picture to ourselves —

The death of Moses. Among the lives of all the servants of God there has been no life more wonderful, no man endowed with a more vital and important mission. We should have expected that such a life would have ended in the glory of some great struggle with the enemies of the God of Righteousness whom he revealed to his people; or, perhaps, quietly, in the enjoyment of an accomplished work, surrounded by the love and gratitude of a

nation which he had led out of slavery. But instead, he leaves a work unfinished and goes up to the silence of a mountain top, there to die in loneliness. And he dies there, after all the splendour of his work, as a man under the displeasure of God. There had been a moment of crisis when he had thought of himself and not of God; and the penalty is to die here before his work is finished. Here, from the top of Pisgar, he looks out over the Land of Promise, the land that his people shall dwell in but he may not enter. Its streams, its mountains, its valleys, its fertile fields, are there before his eyes, but he may not enter. Think of his dying without attaining. Think how true a symbol it is of human life. Which of us ever actually attains? "Poor Moses! Thou too sawest undulating in the distance the ravishing hills of the Promised Land, and it was thy fate nevertheless to lay thy weary bones in a grave dug in a desert! Which of us has not his promised land, his day of ecstasy and his death in exile?"

Consider, first —

That the life of the Old Testament saints was an expectant life. They lived in the faith of promises the fulfilment of which they did not see. We look back at the manifest work of God in the accomplishment of his promises. We have God Incarnate

working with and for us. God has come, and we are caught up in the full tide of the Incarnate Life with which we are in close communion. They could only look forward to One whose Advent was promised. Think of the sublime faith of these men whose lives were cast amid the most discouraging circumstances. It never at any moment in Israel's history seemed as though God's work had acquired any stability: the power of its enemies, the disobedience and faithlessness of the nation, seemed always on the point of bringing the work to naught. But those Old Testament saints and heroes worked on and hoped on in the strength of an unconquerable faith in God. God and the word of God were certain, and no apparent failure could shake even for a moment their faith in him. God had promised to come and therefore he would come; God had promised to set up his kingdom upon the earth and therefore no disaster to Israel could be more than temporary. And remember how little revelation they had in a future life. They did their work with no conviction that they should share in the triumph of God when it came. They worked just because they were God's servants, in utter trust and obedience. "And these all having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect."

Consider, second —

How much there still remains expectant in our lives. We have received much, much more than even prophets saw in their moments of intensest vision; but what we have received is not the complete establishment of God's purpose for us, but the earnest of our inheritance, the vantage ground from which we may and must go on to fuller accomplishment. We still live by the faith that the prophets had, only now faith in One who has come and wills that where he is there shall his servants be. For us there is still the forward look, the vocation to advance the work of the kingdom, which is in the world, indeed, but still has before it its greatest conquests. However, our association with the work of God has not the temporary aspect that had that of the saints of old. We are assured not only of the permanence of the work but of the permanence of our own association with it. But we still look forward to the future, we still stretch forward to greater attainment. Have we still that eagerness and certainty of faith that the prophets had? Can we stand unfaltering on the final Pisgar and see the Promised Land in eager vision? What the church needs to-day is more of the intense faith and trust in God that the prophets had. We need the faith that shall send us forward to the yet imper-

fect work knowing that God will accomplish one more stage of it through us. We need the faith that can confront undaunted all the powers of this world in their array against the kingdom, certain that their triumphs are apparent merely. We need the faith that no Babylonian captivity can shake. We need the faith that can tear aside the curtains of heaven and see Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

Let us, then, pray —

For such faith; the indestructible faith of the prophets. Let us pray for the faith that assures us that we ourselves shall finally be admitted to share in the triumph of God.

O God, who hast prepared for those who love thee such good things as pass man's understanding; pour into our hearts such love towards thee, that we, loving thee above all things, may obtain thy gracious promises, which exceed all that we can desire: through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

.

The death of our Lord was a truly human death. He underwent what we shall undergo—the severance of soul and body. His soul passed as our souls shall pass—into that world where the souls of those who die in the Lord await the time of their perfecting for admission to the final joy of the

saved, the Beatific Vision of God. That is what we mean by Our Lord's Descent into Hell.

But when at death his soul passed to this middle state, it had not, as our souls, to undergo any process of perfecting. Rather, he went as one who had still a mission to fulfil for human souls. For his incarnate work was not only a work for those who lived with him and should live after him; it was effective also for those who had lived before. His redeeming work was on behalf of humanity, and those who had died before his coming had not ceased to exist or to be human that they should be unaffected by the redemption that he brought. Before his coming there had been myriads of souls who had lived faithfully by whatever of light and guidance God had given them. There were many in Israel who had lived by faith in the promises of God, promises of which they had seen no fulfilment. The purpose of the Incarnation was to open the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers—to all who anywhere had accepted and lived by what they knew as the will of God, whether it came to them in the light of revelation, or whether it was the dimly understood whisper of their conscience.

All these were waiting—waiting for a fuller revelation of God; and to them our Lord had a mission to fulfil before the work that his Father had given him to do was fully completed. For me there

is a fascination, a pathetic interest, in the thought of these souls—waiting in their hope and patience, for the coming of a deliverer. Compelled to wait in the unfolding of God's purpose for all humanity. What a sense of the oneness of God's work and of the oneness of humanity when we find thus that progress means the progress of the whole; that the destiny of souls that come from the far-off times in the dawn of humanity, when man became a living soul, and the destiny of the souls to be yet born in some, it may be inconceivably distant, future, far on toward the sunset, are knit into a unity in Incarnate God. What almost incredible breadth it gives to the thought that no man liveth to himself. How our puny purposes are dwarfed and lost in the mighty purposes of God, we start to think; but no, neither dwarfed nor lost, but raised in dignity and responsibility, as elements in the outworking of that sublime purpose. All humanity is one, and tends to a higher unity when, lifted by the power of the Incarnation, it shall finally reach its goal and God be all and in all.

And it was a step in this far-stretching purpose of God that these waiting souls which had had their moment of vision and seen the beauty of the Promised Land from the distant mountain peaks, and been faithful to that vision, should have the fruition of it, and see the face of him in whom they had

trusted and hoped, and be raised into participation in the Incarnate Life. Think, for a moment, of the coming of the triumphant Lord to the blessed dead; to Abraham, who had gone out in reliance on the promise of God, to seek a country; to Moses, who had been found faithful in all his house, and yet had died in the weariness of exile; to Isaiah, to whom, more than to any other, it had been given to catch a far-off vision of his glory and of his sufferings; to St. John Baptist, who had perhaps died with a lingering doubt whether he had seen the Messiah, or no; to St. Joseph, whose love had guarded the infant years of his humanity and who had died in ignorance of the significance of his foster-child; to all these the sunrise comes, the day spring rises with healing in his wings, and the night of shadows flees away forever.

In our own cases the middle state has somewhat of altered meaning. We all go there, but we go as Christians, with faith and hope in a Saviour who has come and into the unity of whose body we have been baptised. We go because we have not been free from sin and must undergo something of the imposed penalty. As the minds of many seem to be confused on this point, let us go a little into detail as to the teaching of the Church on this matter of sin.

Sin is the transgression of the will of God, and

has as its effect the disturbance of the relation between the soul and God and certain ill effects upon the soul itself. Of the effects or "penalties" of sin, we may distinguish two: the injury done to God by the disobedience of his creature which willingly scorns his love and cuts itself off from him; and the reaction of sin upon the sinner, in the injury done his spiritual nature through the disturbance of the harmony between it and God, and (in some cases) certain ill-effects of its action through the violation of natural or social laws. All that consequences of sin which is an offence against God we speak of as the eternal penalty of sin; all that concerns the injury of the human being we think of as the temporal penalty of sin.

Now when we consider what forgiveness means, we see that it must mean the restoration of the normal relations between the soul and God—a movement of the soul towards God that we call repentance; and an action of God—a movement of God toward the soul that we call forgiveness. But what can God forgive? Obviously what you or I can forgive, an offence against himself; i. e., the eternal penalty of sin, the penalty of the consequence of which is the exclusion of the soul from the presence of God. This God always does forgive in answer to our repentance. Hell, which means the perpetual separation of the soul from the presence

of God, can only have place where there is no repentance, and, most probably, where there has been the destruction of the spiritual nature to a degree where repentance is impossible: that is, where sin has been so intense as to destroy the capacity for union with God and the Beatific Vision.

But it must be emphasised that forgiveness affects *only* the relation of the soul to God and removal of the eternal penalty of sin. Forgiveness in itself cannot affect the temporal penalty of sin except so far as by the restoration of the grace of God, that is the Divine Presence in the soul, it facilitates its recovery. It is necessary to stress this point because, through misunderstanding of it, the critics of Christianity have taken occasion to accuse its doctrine of forgiveness as immoral. As one notorious infidel lecturer was wont to ask dramatically: "If Smith owes me ten dollars, and God forgives him, how does that help me?" If the case happened to be an actual occurrence it no doubt helped him to the worth of much more than ten dollars in the applause of the gallery—but it had nothing to do with the Christian doctrine of forgiveness. But it is not only persons of that sort who falsely accuse Christianity. In a recent work by one of the foremost anthropologists of the day there is this statement of the Christian doctrine of recovery from sin:—"This comfortable doctrine teaches us that in

order to blot out the effects of our misdeeds we have only to acknowledge and confess them with a lowly and penitent heart, whereupon a merciful God will graciously pardon our sin and absolve us and ours from its consequences." It ought, one would think, to be elementary, even for eminent scientists, to be at pains to understand the religion that they criticise. The Christian religion, of course, has never taught either that the forgiveness of Smith involved a release from the obligation to pay his debt, or that God's gracious pardon of sin involved release from its temporal consequences.

Christians may be a stupid race ; but they are not so stupid as to imagine that the moral obligations of man to man, which, by the way, rest on the laws of God, are annulled by absolution, or that absolution sets aside the physical consequences of our actions. If the drunkard or the debauchee repents and is forgiven, no one imagines that thereupon his shattered nervous system is restored to soundness. Thank God, the penitent thief can be forgiven even at the last moment, as he hangs upon his cross ; but that does not prevent that he shall carry into Paradise the memory of a wasted and a godless life. Nor even in the realm of the spiritual is it true that the forgiveness whereby God removes the eternal penalty of sin, removes the wounds that sin has inflicted on the spiritual nature. This is a fact of

the experience of every penitent. The penitent knows that spiritual wounds are slow to heal. The prayerless and indifferent years, though their sin is forgiven, carry their inevitable penalty in the difficulty we experience in building up spiritual habits. The spiritual struggles of those who turn to God from a life of godlessness bear on the face of them the penalty of the past.

Now, it is no doubt true, that no soul passes out of the world in a state of spiritual perfection, that is, in a state that makes possible for it that complete union with God which is implied in the enjoyment of the Beatific Vision. If the alternative at death were between heaven and hell we should be obliged to think of the vast mass of the human race taking their way to hell. But, thank God, that is not the teaching of the Catholic Faith. Rather we think of the vast mass of humanity as not having cut themselves off from God and destroyed their spiritual capacity, but as imperfect souls capable of spiritual training and healing. We think of them as passing from the world into the middle state, where, their sins pardoned, and freed from the limitations of this world, they may grow up to the state of spiritual perfection which will make it possible for them to enter the immediate presence of God. The Catholic doctrine of the Middle State fills the future with light and hope for many of

whom, without it, we should be obliged to despair.

The statement that "we brought nothing into this world and certainly we shall carry nothing out," applies only to material things, not spiritual. It is certain that we brought into this world the capacity to know and love and serve God, and that we carry out of it a character that has developed this capacity into an actuality—or annihilated it. The most important thing about a human being at any time is his character—and it is never more important than at the moment of death. It is then the sole possession with which we face the conditions of another world. But assuming that the man has not destroyed all spiritual capacity and does not leave the world with a soul incapable of spiritual response; that is, assuming that he goes to the Middle State and not to a state of final exclusion from God's presence, he goes with a character that is capable of indefinite growth. But in view of much popular teaching, it is necessary to be said that death is not a moral miracle. What it effects is not a change in character, but a change in environment. We are the same persons, with the same characters, an hour after death as we were an hour before; only we are persons facing new circumstances of existence.

Will the new conditions involve suffering — many are anxious to ask. That is as you mean by

suffering—but suffering of some kind I should think they would necessarily involve. Neither hell nor the Middle State would I conceive of as a state of suffering in the sense of punishment inflicted upon the soul. I think we would do well to eliminate the notion of punishment from our thought of any future state of the soul. But suffering is another thing; meaning by suffering, certain necessary reactions of experience upon the soul itself. Suffering of some sort is involved in the conscious continuity of individual existence; more particularly in the fact that we remember. We may think of the continuous self-consciousness of the soul as involving two things. In the first place it is conscious of its past relations with others and of its sins toward them. Can you imagine the murderer or the slanderer not suffering from the keen pain of memory as he thinks of the havoc wrought by his actions? Can you think of the wild boy not filled by the agony of self-reproach as he remembers his heart-broken mother? Can you think of the brutal and unfaithful husband as in bliss when he remembers all that suffering that he caused wife and children? But how long shall this go on and how shall it ever end? I do not know; though, for myself, I like to think of it as ending in the meeting and forgiveness and renewed intercourse with those whom we have sinned against.

Again, we may think of our continuous self-consciousness as involving memory of our past relation to God. The most terrible description of the Day of Judgment in Holy Scriptures is: "They shall look on him whom they pierced." To meet our Lord, realising the meaning and extent of his sacrifice for us; and realising, too, how we have failed him—that must be the essential suffering of the future. There are few things more difficult in human life than to meet those whom we have wronged, and especially when they meet us with forgiveness. It is precisely the forgiveness that increases our difficulty—the sense that our sin has been against love—a love which even under the sting of our sin refuses to take offence. And it will appear to us in another world, if it never has before, that God has not taken offence. Our sins may have raised a wall between us and him, but it was a wall of our building that he always wanted to pass. He always wanted to forgive, and he meets the repentant sinner on the other side of death with a smile of pardon. Will not the very greatness of his love, at the same time that it calls out a passionate answer of love in us, call back, too, through this deathless memory, the wasted years in which there was only love of God for us, not love of us for God. The love that God never had from us—that will live in the burning memory.

But from this, too, our growth in the knowledge and love of God will deliver us. For the essential truth about the Middle State, the certainty of it that requires no speculation, is that it is a state of growth, or progress. Character can never be a stagnant thing; and now that, without any of the hindrances that limit us here, the human being sees the significance of his existence—the ideal of his life—and sets himself to embrace it, what limitations can we imagine to his progress? Here, even when our desires and aspirations are of the best, we find that we are so hampered by the conditions of human life. Not only temptation and sin, but the fact that our lives are bound up in the life of our times, so that our freedom is perpetually checked, so that we are thwarted by lack of co-operation and sympathy. We feel at times that if only we could manage to live our own lives as we see them and plan them we should get on so much better. But we are members one of another and have to bear the burden of the sins and limitations of our fellows. But we think of the future state to which death shall admit us as a state of harmony and sympathy, where lives touch by attraction and are never severed by repulsion. How much that one fact must make for growth!

There, too, will be the greater knowledge—the greater opportunity. Ignorance is such a tremen-

dous factor in our living here. We have to learn by the experience of life; and we never succeed very well in making use of the experience of others; we have to work out our own. And it is such a blundering work! I say we *have* to; but I mean we *choose* to. After all, "we are not Robinson Crusoes, the first to explore the island of human life." The backward spiritual character that men carry into another state is the result of the wilfulness, the stupidity, the blindness, that will not be taught, that will not even open its eyes to the conditions of human living. After all, it is possible to enter the Middle State well on in sanctity. There is a story of a shipwrecked crew that drifted for days in a small boat till, all their supply of water being exhausted, they were on the point of perishing from thirst. Then, a ship came in sight; and when, in answer to their signals, it drew near, they cried out in their agony, "Water—water." Back came the answer that seemed to mock their distress, "Dip your buckets over the side." But so it was—they had drifted into that part of the ocean where the waters of the Amazon go far out into the sea and they were perishing of thirst in the midst of an ocean of fresh water. Is that not true of men—that the water of life, the means of spiritual perfecting, the Sacraments of the Church, are all about them, and they die of thirst? They go out to meet

the new conditions on the other side of death with an ignorance that they assume cannot be enlightened. We do not know what will happen hereafter, they say: but the Catholic Church knows, if they would listen. It knows what spiritual character is and how it is formed. It knows that the character a man has he takes with him at his death.

But *there* the ignorance passes and our eyes are opened. What promise of progress there is in the fact that we shall see our life in the light of God's wisdom and purpose and shall be able to follow that purpose through all the broadening opportunities that the new life will bring to us. For we cannot think of our life as in any way stagnant, a mere silent waiting. Our vocation there, as our vocation here, must still be to service. All our life here is a preparing, and there could be no meaning at all in the preparation, if in another world we should find no opportunity to serve. We shall still be members of a body with relations to all the other members, with opportunities still of ministering to one another. One likes to think of the saints as taking in hand the training of backward souls.

We are all members of the same body, we and they; and although I shall have more to say later on of the Communion of Saints, I must anticipate somewhat here in speaking of the relation of those who are "alive" to those who are *there*. Love and

sympathy, particularly, are not qualities that are impeded in their exercise by the limitations of the senses; and any conception which allows us to think of the Blessed Dead as beyond our love and sympathy is greatly to be deplored. For one thing, they are not beyond the reach of our prayers, nor we beyond the reach of theirs. And this communion through the One Head of the Body is a very real one. On our side of the grave we experience much of consolation in our sorrow when we bring the names of those whom we love with a love unclouded and unbroken, before the Saviour of their souls and ours. It is a foolish question to ask—what can prayer do for them?—if you believe in intercessory prayer at all. It can do just as much for them as it can do for any one who is alive; it can show the continuance of our love and beg God for the grace that every human being needs for the conduct of his life. If they are alive, they have needs, and those needs are supplied by God; and if prayer can under any circumstances avail for the supply of human needs, surely it will avail for theirs.

But prayer is a much broader thing than the petition for the supply of needs. It is a mode of spiritual expression. Through their prayers those who are in the union of the Body of Christ, I have no manner of doubt, exert an influence upon one an-

other. There is an influence here of one personality upon another which is an obvious fact, though we are as yet unable to understand its modes. Personality communicates with personality—thought touches thought. A person at a distance feels my influence and, at times, reads my mind. Persons living together are insensibly influenced, not simply by will and action, but in deeper ways. The more we are in harmony with one another, the more we experience that silent influence. And this influence is deeper and more extensive than we can realise. And when this influence becomes a purely spiritual influence as in prayer, when in its passage from one member of the Body to another it passes, if I may venture the expression, through the Head of the Body, may we not certainly look for an intensification of the power? We say our prayers for one another, not thinking perhaps of any specific needs, but just sending out our spirit in love and sympathy towards them that they may in all things be blessed and live in union with our Lord; does not that bring us all—Head and members—together into a heightened spiritual relation in which spirit touches spirit, and all are filled with the fulness of God? In view of the fathomless meaning of being together “in Christ” and then having “all things” ours, let us not spend our energy in petty questioning, but set ourselves to participation in the joys of our heritage.

THE FIFTEENTH MEDITATION

THE FIFTEENTH MEDITATION

THE THIRD DAY HE ROSE AGAIN FROM THE DEAD

Let us listen to the words of the Gospel —

NOW upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came upon the sepulchre, bringing the spices that they had prepared . . . and they entered in and found not the body of the Lord Jesus.

Let us picture to ourselves —

These women coming to the tomb of Jesus bringing their spices for the last offices of love. They come in the deepest grief; we seem to see their tears and hear their sobs. The sepulchre was the sepulchre of a friend. And, then, see! the stone is

rolled away! Their first thought is that the Jews have broken in and taken that loved body. See them as they doubtfully enter. The body is not there! Surely it has been stolen. But there are no signs of desecration. There are the carefully folded grave-clothes. What doubt, what perplexity, what added grief to a grief that already seemed too great. And then the vision of angels. See those women bowing with their faces to the earth before the angelic presence. And then the astonishing words: "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here; he is risen." With what new hopes they go back—and yet with what perplexity. And among them were Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus. With what different thoughts they had mourned him. But now it is the wonderful growing joy of recovery—a joy out of which doubt was more and more fading. Surely it was not strange that he should come back to them; the strange thing was that they should have thought him lost!

Consider, first —

These women had loved Jesus in a very special way as only women know how to love, with a passionate self-abandonment of their lives to him. To them the death of Jesus had not meant so much the disappointment of an ideal:—one does not think of the Messianic ideal as having so much hold on

them as on the Apostles. It was less to them that the kingdom was not now to be restored to Israel. Rather, they had lost One in whom they trusted and whom they loved; it was not a disappointment, it was a personal loss. Each had her own special feeling of loss. To the Blessed Virgin it was the son—that son wonderfully born, in whom all her hopes had centered and to whom her heart clung, who had vanished in death. To the Magdalen it was the rescuer who had brought a restored purity and a renewed life. In the lives of the other women there were personal grounds of gratitude and love. To them comes the angelic message of the restoration of the Lord. At first there would be no question of under what new conditions their intercourse with him would be carried on. The only fact of importance was that the Lord was alive; that they might once more meet him and hear his gracious words. The love that had not died in their hearts throws off its oppression and hurries to meet the risen Saviour.

Consider, second —

How often our attitude before our Lord is one that would only be justified toward one who was dead and had left us to disappointment and shattered dreams. Our timid and half-hearted religious action, our nerveless grasp on the faith, our

discouragement before the problems of Christian living, our lack of trust before what seems a dark future, are really the attitude we might expect of those who had sadly performed the last rites over a loved friend and are turning in depressing grief from the tomb of their dead ideals. Many a life seems to have missed the message: He is not here, he is risen from the dead. If there were a real love of Jesus in our hearts could we ever be the prey, as we so often are, of doubt, discouragement, distress? The Lord is risen indeed. Do you not feel the impulse of the resurrection life kindling your spiritual nature? Can you not go out to meet the difficulty of living in the promise of the resurrection morning, in confidence of a living Master? Christ is risen: and because he is risen all darkness and hopelessness are swept away; and we go forth in the strength of the resurrection life, filled with it, possessed by it. There are no longer any doubts admissible; there is no longer any disheartenment to trouble; there is no longer any vocation that cannot be filled. However justified might be a waning confidence in a Christ deserted by his followers and dying in shame a malefactor's death, all that is swept aside by the message of the resurrection morning, all darkness fades before the light that shines from the riven tomb.

Let us, then, pray—

To be so filled with hope and confidence in the power and presence of the risen Jesus that our lives may respond in joyful service of him.

Almighty God, who through thy only-begotten Son Jesus Christ hast overcome death, and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life; we humbly beseech thee that, as by thy special grace preventing us thou dost put into our minds good desires, so by thy continual help we may bring the same to good effect; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost ever, one God, world without end.

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As this is neither a dogmatic nor apologetic book, we may pass rather lightly through the tangle of controversies that encompass the belief in the Resurrection of our Lord. Controversy usually is a very fruitless discussion between people who are not at all agreed on any premises and therefore are incapable of reaching a common conclusion. It is not to be supposed that those who do not believe in God, or in the divinity of our Lord, or in the possibility of miracles, will approach the evidences of the Resurrection in such a way that it is possible for them to be convinced of it. Their minds will undoubtedly be impressed most of all by the diffi-

culty of harmonising the traditions of the Resurrection that are found in the New Testament. On the other hand, those who are Christians will be so impressed by the facts of Christianity of which they are in possession, that they will pay small attention to any difficulties of narrative. To the traveller who, after some centuries, tries to pick his way into the interior of Africa in hopes of verifying some old Egyptian or Greek tradition of a wonderful city lying hidden in an inaccessible valley of the distant mountains, it may well seem as he struggles through the jungles or skirts the impassable swamp, or hunts in vain for the hoped-for pass into the heart of the mountains, that the tales of the old chronicles are more likely to be fables than that men ever built their dwelling places in so inaccessible and barren a region; but the man who has passed the mountains and found hospitable welcome in the city, and learned to know the beauty of its palaces and the loving hearts of its inhabitants, gives small thought to the seeming contradictions of the narratives of the old chronicles or the unintelligible routes of the old map-makers. And it would seem to be true that the discussions about our Lord's Resurrection are discussions between men who, with the New Testament as a new-bought guide book, are trying to arrive at the truth of the Resurrection as an historical fact by retrac-

ing the route that the Apostles followed in arriving at it; and those who, having long lived with the Risen Jesus as their soul's friend, are quite naturally negligent and even uninterested in the method by which the first experience came to be. No doubt there are many difficulties to be met with in the attempt to reconcile the Resurrection narratives, but that would seem to be the inevitable result of these being *narratives* and not *one narrative*; that is, of there being a number of fragmentary impressions of a great fact—impressions of many actors in the events set down at different times and transmitted in different ways. If there were one consistent story, no doubt it would be thrown over as the witness of only one person, not sufficient to bear the weight of the tremendous fact to which it testifies. As there are numbers of fragmentary experiences they are all rejected because their edges overlap in strange ways. But the thing that seems to be lost sight of is that before any of the stories were submitted to writing, the Resurrection itself had become the foundation of Christian living to such an extent, that no one thought of attempting, in documents written for Christians, to set out a consistent and scientific account of it, fortified by dates and documents, and verifiable details of time and place. The thing itself was too fresh in Christian experience to need rationalistic analysis. The

very fact that as an experience the Resurrection was so stupefying and revolutionary, prevented any clear and detailed account of it, and rendered such an account unnecessary.

For us, what the Resurrection essentially means is the resumption of activity by our Lord, who, in the experience of his followers, had been dead. We cannot conceive that the questions which trouble men now, so much as occurred to them. For this Jesus who had been dead was once more alive. He had been among them once more. They had seen his face and heard the familiar voice; a relation which they had thought irreparably broken had been renewed. Then once more he had vanished, and this time under circumstances which they accept as final, so far as any visible and bodily presence among them is concerned. But the grief and terror of the hours that followed the Crucifixion are not duplicated in the hours that follow the Ascension. There has been a fresh orientation of life, and they are now on the stable basis of those who have a definite relation to the Risen Jesus, and who are to go forth to proclaim him to the world as its Saviour. He that was dead is alive again, and behold, he liveth forevermore. All that was implied in the new relation to him and mission for him could not and need not be immediately known. It would emerge as they lived and

met the exigencies of their mission under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

That mission defined itself as the establishment of a community — a brotherhood — a church. And as we put ourselves back at their point of departure and watch the unfolding of the apostolic work, we come to see why it is that what is called a “spiritual Resurrection” of Jesus in no wise forms an intelligible basis of that work. To think of the Spirit of Jesus as after the Resurrection manifesting itself in the consciousness of the Apostles so that they came to understand that though dead he was still alive and acting in them and with them, but not risen in the sense of having resumed the Body, in no wise answers to what they actually did. They went out to preach the Resurrection; and they did not preach a “spiritual” Resurrection, but a bodily one. They preached that with the more emphasis as they came to understand more clearly that to become a Christian was not to accept a certain body of facts or to mould character in accordance with a certain body of ethical teaching, but to be put in a certain relation to the Risen Jesus, to be grafted into his Body and live by his Incarnate Life. To-day perhaps more than ever before, it is being insisted that Christianity is not doctrine but life; but by life is usually meant not life at all, but a certain ethical habit of action, a certain obedience to moral

ideals in our social relations. This has no resemblance at all to what the Christian Scriptures mean by life. By life they mean a new vitality which is the outcome of being put into living union with the humanity of the Risen Jesus, conceived as the medium through which the life of God flows out to the life of men. The life which the Apostles taught depends on the present existence of the Incarnate Redeemer, and our contact with him—our being in him. "In Christ" is the most characteristic phrase of the Apostolic teaching; and by "in Christ" they mean a literal incorporation into the Incarnate Body which takes into its unity each soul that is regenerated in Christ Jesus.

Such teaching implies of course a view of the Resurrection Body of our Lord as having undergone a marked change in the fact of the Resurrection. Without ceasing to be a body, and a body in some sense continuous with the body of his humiliation, the body of Jesus after the Resurrection shows by its action that it has undergone deep modifications. It has become now the centre of spiritual activities in a way that the pre-Resurrection body could not be—it has become utterly dominated by the life of the Spirit. We have to regard the appearance of the body after the Resurrection as not the natural appearance of a material object but as a thing willed, a certain accommodation to

the needs of the Apostles. But the Resurrection body is capable of activities which are not possible for "natural" bodies. It is evidently dependent upon the spiritual will, appearing or disappearing as our Lord chooses, moving without regard to material obstacles and now in its moments of manifestation obviously impressing those who see it as changed in some respects from the body they had known. He plainly impresses them with a sense of mystery which is quite unlike the terror and awe that would be inspired by the return of one who had been dead, and which shows no sign of wearing off with increased familiarity. We cannot understand this new condition of the body; we can only describe it as one that shows the body as the focus of a certain spiritual activity; the spiritual energy of our Lord's personality still reaches the Apostles mediated by the body. We understand that it would reach them as truly if, through condescension, the body were not made visible. That our Lord was visible after the Resurrection was obviously for evidential purposes, not of the essence of his still being incarnate.

The Apostles then, went out to preach the Resurrection, not so much as an evidential fact, though as such it was of supreme value, not so much to base the authority of their preaching on the historical fact of the Resurrection, though they neces-

sarily did that; but they went out to proclaim to men the possibility of a new life through incorporation with the living Jesus. What they preached was justification, the deliverance from sin; and to be justified meant to them, not to see life from another point of view and the shaping of one's actions in accordance with it, but the becoming of new creatures by the participation in the life of our Lord. Sinners are promised the forgiveness of their sins, not by judicial decree because of their repentance and faith in the work of Christ, but by sacramental action in that their repentance led them to such action as resulted in their being so acted on by God that as the result they are "in Christ," partakers of his Death and Resurrection because they are one with him. To put it in another way: the Resurrection is not an historic fact to which we look back with faith, but a present dynamic fact by the action of which we are regenerated.

This conception of Christianity is absolutely different from that which conceives our Lord's life-work as resulting in an example, a perfect specimen of human living, that we are to imitate and which we are to multiply in more or less illegible copies to the end of time. The conception of God as a schoolmaster who has written on the black-board of the universe a perfect sentence that all

men are to spend their lives writing off into the notebook of their experience is not exhilarating. There are few things so barren as a great example. It may give a certain direction to impulse, if the impulse is already there. But an example as such, is quite incapable of producing any result. The world was not perishing for lack of examples when Christ came. The examples of Abraham and Moses and Isaiah had not saved Judaism. The trouble about an example is that there is no power in it to force its execution. The boy wishes to be a sculptor. Do you set him down before a statue of Michael angelo and say, "Well, there is one of the greatest statues of the world—copy that"? A man feels that he is the slave of sin. What is the good of showing him the life of a saint? That is merely saying to him, "There are people who are not like you." That is no news to the sinner. What he wants is not knowledge, but power. And the Christianity that the Apostles preached was power. They said to men: "You are sinners"—and there was no revelation in that. The human conscience had sufficiently testified to the fact. But they added: "There is in existence a power which will enable you to overcome sin—the power of the Risen Jesus." Then men listened. They went on: "Be baptised and wash away your sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Then men acted.

And the meaning of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost was that by them men were born again and made living members of the Risen Jesus.

The Church, it is commonly said, is founded on the Resurrection. Like all such summings up, the saying presents only one phase of truth. What it really means is that the Apostles preached a living, not a dead Christ. They went out not to found philosophical schools for the propagation of a doctrine, but to lead men to forgiveness of sins and newness of life through relationship to a living Saviour. His resurrection has demonstrated his saving power in that it manifests his triumph over death and hell, and exhibits him as the new head of humanity. The good news that the Christian missionaries had to proclaim was the news of the possible liberation of men from the slavery of sin. "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more"—so ran the message—"for in that he died, he died unto sin once for all; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God." All through the Apostles' teaching there runs a note of recent triumph. We seem to read the minds of the first Christians as those of men who have but recently escaped from imminent danger. As they look back to their preceding life, it is with a shudder, almost with a gasp of relief, as of men finding themselves unexpectedly saved from some threatening disaster. They have been

snatched from the very jaws of death; and their relief is not the less but rather greater in that the revelation of the danger was almost coincident with the escape. A man snatched back from the crumbling edge of a precipice finds himself saved in the same moment that he realises his almost disaster; but his breath stops and his being is dissolved in trembling at the thought of the rocks below that were ready to receive him. Over and over again those early Christians recur to the horrors of the heathen life from which they have been drawn. St. Paul recurs again and again to the long roll of sins which had been characteristic of the old life. "Dead in trespasses and sins," is the summing up of it. "Without God in the world," was its essential horror. The song of thankfulness rises, wave upon wave, as they think of the past. "Through Jesus Christ our Lord," is their explanation of the manner of it. One pictures the little group of Christians in any community, as they gathered together in the early dawning, to receive the Bread from Heaven, and to "sing hymns to Christ as God," as before all else joyful. The thrill of their deliverance was still in their souls; the wonder of their redemption was still fresh to them; their exultant experience of the redeeming power of the Risen Jesus translated itself into hymns of praise. Perhaps the mysterious speaking with tongues which

was so frequent in the first Christian assemblies was but experience become so vivid as to be inarticulate. So we feel the progress of Christianity through the first century in the sense of a boundless life—life everywhere manifesting itself in its power to sweep men from the old sins, to reconstruct character, to take from the slave the weight of his chains, to make the freedman rejoice in that he has become the bond-servant of Christ, to shatter old habits and old relations and to incarnate itself in those who under its touch become new creatures in Christ Jesus—"The power of an endless life" is what we feel working everywhere.

And that—is it not?—is one of the most characteristic differences between their Christianity and ours! We say to ourselves that it cannot well be otherwise. Christianity comes to us under quite other conditions. We, for the most part, are no longer converted to it; we are born to it; we live not as heathen, for it is a Christian world. We grow up with a sense of Christian obligation and service, and we cannot expect the abounding joy that came with the experience of a new deliverance that transforms all the world.

All of which looks true enough, though I believe it to be profoundly untrue. In the first place, we are not born into a Christian world—there is no such thing. Even here in America, which we speak

of as a Christian country, we are born into a society which is in many respects profoundly hostile to Christianity, and which creates an environment which not the wildest imagination can regard as favourable to Christian growth. More than half of the population do not belong to any Christian body of any sort; and of those who do, an immense number are only nominal Christians, and detract from, rather than add to, the strength of the Christian community. It is no gain that the line of demarcation between the Church and the world has become so blurred that we no longer experience much change in passing from the one to the other; that indeed we are not quite sure what we could mean by "Christian society." We have agreed, tacitly, outside of our actual assemblies in Church, to sink all differences and disregard all divisions—we have arrived at an understanding that the only way to conduct life successfully under present conditions, is to ignore religion outside of the walls of churches, and actually to oppose it, if it threatens to raise its head in "secular affairs." So there is peace between the Church and the world so profound that we have ceased even to think of possible frontiers. It can hardly be contended that this is a conversion of the world; it can hardly be contended that American society as constituted is a better training ground for Christianity than the

Roman Empire when Christianity made its first impact on the world. Christianity had a much better opportunity of making disciples of strong and definite character when a man's profession of Christ marked him as a member of a body definitely hostile to many of the habits and practices of the time, than under conditions in which any strictness of life marks a man, even among our fellow Christians, as being somewhat peculiar or unnecessarily strict. It is difficult to find anywhere in the modern society any sense of an opposition between Church and world, or indeed any feeling of a religious sense attaching to the world. Worldliness has come to mean for most people, one imagines, indulgence in practices that they themselves cannot afford.

The difficulty of living a Christian life is, therefore, not less but greater, under our conditions. And the sense of escape, of deliverance, of rescue, has faded out of modern experience, not because there is no longer anything to be delivered from, but because we do not care to be delivered from it. There are no less sins in the modern world than in the ancient; and we have no less need to be delivered from them. We no less need that the experience of a true conversion should come to pass in our lives; a conversion which shall be the realising of our lives as definitely Christian, with motive,

aims, ends, that are radically different from those of the unconverted. You cannot inherit Christianity, so that you need no conversion to it. You may be baptised into Christ and brought up under Christian discipline and Christian obedience. In such a case there is not the perception of a new way of life, the acceptance of an offered salvation which you had not known of before. But in even the best trained life there needs must come the time when the Religion of Christ must be recognised, not as conformity to rules and principles, that we have learned, but as a distinct personal experience—the experience of a relation to the Risen Jesus. If your religion is to be a living thing, there must come a time when you pass from the acceptance of the truths you have learned to the personal possession of them in a vital experience. This may happen suddenly or it may happen slowly—the important thing is that it happens, and that in the happening you realise yourself as a sinner redeemed by the Blood of Christ and now alive by his life. The birth of personal religion, the religion of experience, as contrasted with the religion of habit, is as needful to-day as any form of conversion was in the early ages of the Church. The joy that ran through the world at the first preaching of the Gospel was, we are born to newness of life through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead:

and the reason that to-day we so little find the joy of religion is because we have not passed from passive acceptance of truths we have heard to the active experience of them as power in life. As we look out on Christendom to-day, is not the thing that is conspicuously lacking, just the sense of Christianity as power? We conceive it as decency of conduct, to a certain degree as obligation, perhaps even as privilege; but do we conceive it as power, as driving force, as a new energy which makes life vivid with its activity? Is our Christian life a life swept along by the power of the Resurrection? Do we feel that the love of Christ constraineth us? Is the conviction present to us that just because we are Christians we are not tamely to acquiesce in the conventions of society, but to build up a life-experience that is based on quite other ideals?

There is something the matter with our presentation of Christianity. Men are growing tired of Christianity, we are told; they are becoming convinced that its role in the world is played out; that like all preceding religions it has had its time of energy and growth when it answered to and supplied certain needs of men; but that time has passed and it is now entering upon its period of decadence. What has produced this feeling, unless it is that we have ceased to present Christianity as redeeming

and renewing power? Men have not ceased to sin, they have not ceased to experience the effects of sin, they have found no new religion that is an effective substitute for the Gospel. They have even found in these last years that the science to which they looked so hopefully half a century ago as a probable deliverer, has nothing to say to the deeper needs of life. Why then should Christianity lose its appeal? Is it not that we have ceased to make its real appeal and have substituted for it something that we thought would be more effective because less offensive to men. Have we not been making Christianity popular and dropping the doctrines that offended the natural man till the Gospel in our hands has lost its power? We have been meeting the demands of modern conditions, we thought, and now the modern person turns on us with the complaint that we are not even amusing! That we do not compete in any town or village with other forms of amusement! This surely is Nemesis!

Let us go back in our own lives, at any rate, if we have drifted from that standpoint, to meditate on the resurrection of Jesus as the revelation of renewing power; power that is able to lay hold upon our lives and energise them in such wise that they shall be filled with the joy and peace of believing; so filled because we have found in the Risen

Jesus the gift of pardon and the gift of life ; pardon which has swept away all its sins and filled it with the joy of deliverance ; life which sends it out into the world as a centre of living service, glad to spend and be spent in the service of its Risen Master.

THE SIXTEENTH MEDITATION

THE SIXTEENTH MEDITATION

AND ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN

Let us listen to the words of St. Luke —

WHILE they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

Let us picture —

The Apostles watching the cloud into which Jesus had vanished. How wonderful had been those forty days since his resurrection, and how much that was new about Jesus and his relation to them they had learned. They had learned that the human relation to which they had been accustomed was being transformed. They could not have expected to keep the Risen Lord with them: they

would be prepared, not only by his own words but by their new knowledge of him, for such a fact as this. The wonder with which they watched him vanish would speedily give way to sense of loneliness and desolation. Not the disappointment, the sense of crushed hopes, that followed Calvary; but a sense of being thrown back on their own resources in the work that they now understood lay before them. They could not yet understand the restoration of his Presence which would be effected through the action of the Holy Spirit. See them standing there not quite realising that this is the last sight of Jesus; but the feeling that it is grows, and with it grows the pain. But God does not leave them un comforted: there is the coming of the angels and their exhortation to activity. Why stand ye gazing up into heaven: this same Jesus shall come again. Yes, he shall come again; but in what a different way. And how much there is for them to do before he come. They have to prepare the world for the Second Advent.

Consider, first —

Their attitude toward Jesus had been one of growing appreciation. He had attracted them, no doubt, in the first place, by his winning personality. One can imagine that those with whom our Lord talked for a few hours would be bound forever to

him. Think, for instance, of the experience of St. John and St. Andrew on that day when, as they were talking with St. John Baptist, they looked on Jesus as he walked, and the Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God," and the two disciples followed Jesus and abode with him that day. What a marvellous experience! With what passionate devotion they came away! They had no doubt that they had found the Messiah. The experience of the years that followed would have developed on two lines. There was the friend whose life and thought and love and guidance meant ever more to them, became ever more needful, so that they could not conceive life separated from him. And then there was the deepening sense of the mystery of their friend. His relation to God it became plain was quite other than theirs. He made the Father known to them, but he did not need that any should make the Father known to him; he knew the Father in some direct personal way that they could not even conceive. He derived from the Father that incalculable power that enabled him to speak as never man spake, and to do what it transcended the power of man to do. They would have become accustomed to this transcendence of ordinary humanity which was constantly making itself felt in his acts and words. His mystery would have deepened as he disappointed their Messianic hopes and entered

on the work of his passion: it was unspeakably deepened by the experiences of the resurrection and the days following. And yet those days that led up to and culminated in the Ascension were the beginning of an understanding of him which, in the light of Pentecost, became an illuminating reconciliation: their friend and mysterious teacher, whom they had thought might be the Messiah, was indeed God made man.

Consider, second —

In our experience of Jesus we start, as it were, from the other end: from a belief in the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, from the belief in the existence of One, enthroned in heavenly places, who bears there our nature, a nature that he has assumed that he might live among men and enter into human experience. The Apostles had to learn the seemingly impossible lesson that this intimate friend with whom they ate and drank and walked about the streets of Judean cities and through the country roads of Galilee was Eternal God. They had to see their friend transformed before their eyes, and yet to hold fast to the fact that in finding a God they were not losing a friend. We have what is, no doubt, the harder task: having started with God Incarnate, to conceive the fact that he is also our friend; to learn

that it is possible for us to abide with him and have an intercourse more unspeakably real and close than that of the Apostles when they talked with him; to have a communion more intimate than theirs, through the medium of the nature that we share with him; because it is no longer that the divine Son has come to earth to share the toils, the sorrows, the temptations of men, but that we, because he has triumphantly passed through human experience, and conquered the sin that had conquered man, and is risen and ascended and sitteth at the right hand of God, are raised up to dwell with him in heavenly places. The dynamic centre of our life henceforth is in its union with the ascended Jesus, through whom we receive, not simply the impulse of a communicated power, but the living energy of a personal presence. The Apostles moved through friendship to an experience of divinity: we move from a conviction of divinity to an achieved friendship.

Let us, then, pray —

That we may not look up into the clouds of heaven for a vanished and inaccessible God, but that we may so embrace him by faith and love that we may find our true life in communion with him.

Grant, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that like as we do believe thy only begotten Son our Lord

Jesus Christ to have ascended into the heavens; so we may also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with him continually dwell, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end.

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We think of the Apostles as going back to Jerusalem from the Mount of the Ascension with heavy hearts. However much their minds may have been illumined during these last days; however much they may have grown in understanding of our Lord and of the meaning of his work; however much they may have been prepared for this separation; it would still bring with it the sense of great loss. We may think that we are prepared for separation from a friend whom we love, and indeed have so represented this event to ourselves as to be ready for it—be reconciled to it, as we say—and yet the actual coming of death is not without its shock. We may have the most intense faith in the resumption of personal relations in the future, and still feel that they will not be just these relations that are severed now. The subtle shadings of our friendly relations, the delicate interplay of sympathetic personalities, was called out by just these circumstances in which we have grown together. The future may hold other and deeper and more significant relations for us, but it cannot repeat just

these; and so the shadow falls on this parting. And fell, we may be sure, on the hearts of the Apostles, and would remain there till the old relation was merged in the new: would remain there, indeed, always as a priceless memory that nothing ever replaced. It comes down to us in the intimate personal touches that the attentive reader of the Gospels is so familiar with, actual notes of the day's experience, we feel as we read them. It was this past that was broken with when the cloud received him out of their sight.

But that sense of personal loss being granted, we can look at the Ascension in its universal significance. The Ascension did not really remove our Lord from the Apostles; rightly considered it brought him nearer to them—but it did consummate a change of relations that had been initiated at the Resurrection. Henceforth our Lord's relation to humanity is that of One who has vindicated his right to be and to act as its Head. In union with him human nature has won its battle and in him takes its place at the right hand of God. His relation to men henceforth is that of Head to members, a relation of mutual indwelling, the consequence of participation in the same life.

For the Ascension is not, we need not remind ourselves, the resumption by the Son of his pre-incarnate state—that state that was his with the

Father before the world was. As Divine Son, as Eternal and glorious Logos, he had never left that state. Rather, the Ascension means the entering into the Heavenly Places of the Incarnate Son. The manhood assumed by God is now eternally glorified and made the permanent channel of mediation between God and man. As God's approach to us for the purpose of redemption was through the assumed manhood, so our approach to him for purposes of sanctification is through the same manhood. The bond remains eternally because the relation that depends upon it is eternal. There is no limit to the need of mediation.

This conception of the permanence of the Ascended Manhood as the medium of divine activity, is absolutely vital to the Catholic conception of Christianity. Here again the same fact that I touched upon in the last meditation emerges, that what is called a "spiritual" Resurrection, that is, the resumption by our Lord of his pre-incarnate state, negatives the entire teaching of the Christian religion of the relation of God and man. A Christianity that has no place for God Incarnate in the heavens is a maimed Christianity—a Christianity that makes all the subsequent methods of God's dealing with men as they are described in the New Testament inconceivable. We may very easily test the types of religion that are offered to us by the

place that they find for the Ascended Humanity of Christ.

That type of Christianity, for instance, that we have had to comment upon several times already, which conceives of Christianity as an ethical life deriving its impulses from the example of our Lord, plainly has no place for an Ascended Humanity. The purpose of the Incarnation was to show men how to live, and that being done, the purpose served by the body of Christ was finished. It would be a mere impertinence in the heavenly world. Our present relation to our Lord might be summed up in the word *prayer*. We pray to God and God answers our prayers. He helps us, in some indefinite way, to lead the life of imitation of his Son. This conception of Christianity contains no thought of a present action of God on humanity through the humanity which he assumed. Indeed one does not quite see why God should have become Incarnate at all. It seems more in accord with the probabilities of things—and this type of religion is finding it so in an increasing degree—to fall back on the notion that Jesus Christ was not God at all, but a specially endowed man.

Again, there is another and higher type of Christianity which still fails to meet the test of the Ascension. It conceives man as in constant need of the help of God—of his grace; but it conceives of

that grace as something imposed from the outside; that is, an external influence brought to bear on our nature. I am afraid that this is the common notion of the action of God. This type of religion takes full account of the work of Christ—the Incarnation and Atonement as removing certain barriers and assuring for us the possibility of forgiveness and access to the Father. But that has been done. And from that point on one sees no reason why the Incarnation persists. God now acts directly on the individual soul in response to penitence and prayer. This type of religion shows its essential nature in one of its favourite sayings:—*It will tolerate nothing between the soul and God.* It rejects the Catholic conception of the Sacraments, precisely on the ground that they are *intrusions*. That there should be a Real Presence of the Humanity of Jesus in the Sacrament of the Altar whereby he enters into the soul and uniting himself with it, makes his abode there; that there should be an action of the Incarnate Jesus through the ministry of his priests in the forgiveness of sin, this is the interposition of something between the soul and God.

No doubt; but the thing interposed is precisely that which God interposed there when he took human nature—the sacred humanity of Christ. If it is not interposed there permanently, not as a

barrier between the soul and God, but as the channel of God's action upon the soul, then the whole notion of the Incarnation is otiose and the Ascension and Session at the Right Hand of God inconceivable. The Catholic religion conceives no facts of the Creed in this barren and pedantic way. It conceives them as meaningful and dynamic facts. If Christ ascended into the heavens in our nature that he assumed at his Incarnation, it is because that nature is now *useful*; because action constantly originates in it. If the Son of God now bears our nature it is because the bearing of it is necessary for the work that he is now doing.

And we are permitted to understand something of this necessity. We understand that the work of Christ now is not the influencing of people to keep rules of some kind; or the work of supplementing their efforts to live a certain kind of life by the addition to them of a certain external power; but the creation of a manhood indwelt by God. The redemptive process constantly realises itself in the world by God, through the medium of Incarnate Christ, entering into the souls of men and taking their manhood into God. There is a constant communication to men, not of some vague thing called grace, but of the Incarnate nature of Christ, to the end that redeemed man, so indwelt, may realise in his own life the fruits of his redemption. The

permanent Incarnation thus finds its meaning as a permanent channel of communication between the divine and the human, and is the permanent means of union, the means by which man is even now lifted up to dwell with Christ in heavenly places.

This is the truth that throbs through the whole New Testament, not the truth of our rescue, but of our exaltation. Humanity being in Christ, is lifted up to dwell with him in heavenly places; and this not in some vaguely "spiritual" sense, by which men usually intend a harmony of thought and feeling, but by an actual incorporation in Christ, which effects that our life essentially is where the dynamic centre of it is. That Christ dwells in us and we in him is, no doubt, a spiritual fact, but that does not mean that it is less than a fact—a figure of speech.

In the light of this fact the Sacraments assume a significance that they cannot otherwise have. Dissociated from the Ascended Humanity of Jesus, the Sacraments can be, at most, suggestive rites. And that, naturally, is what they become in religious systems that have no place for the Ascension. And because apart from any connection with the humanity of our Lord they are, in fact, not very suggestive, they tend more and more to become pieces of antiquated symbolism. The lesser Sacraments are incontinently dropped out of such sys-

tems of religion and the greater are retained, one fancies, because the direction of them is so explicit in the New Testament. But their importance is minimized and denied. They cease to be regarded as channels of grace.

And again: the notion of grace which is perfectly definite and comprehensible from the Catholic point of view, tends to evacuate all meaning from any other—tends to become mere indefinite influence which has no necessary relation to the Incarnation. It has to be assumed that God acts for us in some way, but it is also assumed that if we say that it is in such and such ways, we are again interposing something between the soul and God and limiting his power. It is assumed that if we attach God's grace to certain prescribed acts we are reducing religion to magic. No doubt, if we were prescribing the acts; we might then regard them as incantations of some sort. But the whole gist of the contention is that we have prescribed nothing; that the prescription comes from God, as so unquestionably it does in the two greater Sacraments at any rate; and that further, the meaning of the prescription is plain enough—that through them the Incarnate God comes into our lives. Grace is not a vague influence, but the presence of the Incarnate in the soul, working there that he may transform us into new men moulded in the

image of Christ Jesus. Sacramental action is not imposed stress but indwelling presence; it is a method of action that altogether harmonises with God's treatment of humanity from the moment of the Incarnation. If the complete meaning of religion is the union of Creator and creature in another life, we can see why the method of the Sacraments should be persisted in, not abandoned.

Again: our Lord, throned in heavenly places, continues that sacrificial action begun in his earthly work. He ever liveth to make intercession for us; and this intercession of his humanity is based upon his sacrificial action—it is summed up in his presentation of himself as sacrificial. His sacrifice was not a temporal act performed on the Cross to which we look back with grateful memory. He is still to-day a sacrifice for the sins of the world—one sacrifice forever, a sacrifice that has no end. So to-day we still approach God "through Jesus Christ our Lord"; we plead before God the still-existing sacrifice of his Son. The mediatorial work of our Lord was only begun during his earthly life; it has been going ever since with an increasing extension. Whenever to-day the Sacrifice of the Altar is offered there is the presentation and pleading of his mediatorial work. The action of heaven is presented in the action of the Church, where the same Incarnate Saviour offers the same sacrifice

because he himself is then present both as priest and victim; and because of this, the sacrifice of the Altar is not some new sacrifice but one and the same sacrifice that our Lord always offers, for there is no other. There is a memorial of his Death and Passion made before the Father, but what is presented to the Father is Christ Sacrificed, Risen and Ascended, as he abides to-day and forever. The presence on the Altar and the presence in heaven are not two, are not substance and shadow, are not reality and picture, but one.

Because all these things are so, the centre of our spiritual life and activity is in heaven. Our spiritual life is the manifestation of that eternal life of Jesus which is communicated to us through our inherance in him. The movement of our lives now is toward the heavenly places where Christ sits at the right hand of God. We seek those things that are above. This shifting of the centre of interest from earth to heaven, from the material to the spiritual, is that much denounced other-worldliness which has been for some time now the reproach of Christians, under the sting of which many Christians have tried to shift the centre of activity once again to the world. To do so is sheer disaster. I do not know why we should seek to deny this fact or to obscure it, that it is characteristic of Christians that they seek a country. One

is quite naturally more vitally interested in the concerns of that country where one hopes to spend the eternal years than in those of a place where one is but a sojourner—a pilgrim and a stranger; just as one is quite naturally more interested in the affairs of the earthly city where one dwells than in that in which one only passes the night. One makes shift to put up with the inconveniences of the temporal, but one is careful to adjust oneself to the eternal.

But the critics of other-worldliness miss the fact that the temporal life of the Christian and his eternal life are not two diverse things separated in time and place, but that the Christian is living the eternal life now. It is not that his conversation will be in heaven, but that it is now there. The Christian is developing now under the conditions of the present human life, and his discipline is now being carried out under the conditions of human society here. His vocation is to display here the qualities of eternal life, and in proportion as he does so, his surroundings are changed for the better. It can hardly be contended that one who strives to live the life of the Beatitudes here is making the world worse; what is contended is that the world is now so bad that it is difficult to live the life there. But the world will grow better as it has in it more of purity and peaceableness; more

of self-sacrifice and less of self-seeking; that is, as human life is affected by heavenly motives. We are much pressed by the conception of "useful members of society," and we assert that usefulness is an ideal to strive for. Only one is inclined sometimes to examine the notion of usefulness. Is it so clear, as seems to be assumed, that the honest tradesman, let us say, who sells groceries at the shop at the corner, and so makes money for the support of himself and family, is more *useful* than the man who passes his time in prayer for the conversion of the world? It is at least conceivable that the latter exerts a higher and farther-reaching influence for good than the former. That, in any case, is the Christian's contention. We believe that this universe is fundamentally a spiritual system, governed by spiritual forces; and that the man who is on the side of the spiritual forces, whose life is in harmony with them, is the really useful man. We in this country have seen the failure of too many attempts to improve humanity, based on the assumption that all man needs to make him better is more knowledge of material fact, to have any further confidence in the method. We are convinced that all true improvement of humanity has in the past, and will be in the future, the result not of increasing knowledge of material fact, but of increase in the perceptions of spiritual values. We

believe that even now the righteous man is a better citizen than the clever man, and that the saint is worth more to society in the long run than the philanthropist; that all that is of any worth whatever in the ideals of those who would reform society are the elements of the life that is lived with Christ in God which the Church has been insisting on for 2,000 years.

For harmony with God means harmony with his work, wherever we may be, not harmony with some future work. Our participation in the Risen Life of Jesus means participation in his interests now; in the transformation of this world into the kingdom of God. The human bond that unites us to him answers a communion of love and sympathy that reveals to us the meaning of his present activity. "I call you friends"—is one of his sayings that throws a brilliant light upon our present relation to him. "The servant knoweth not what his lord doeth," but we have been admitted to share his secret, to aid in his work. It is not that we are passive recipients of gifts from him, but that we are vital centres of his activity. The light coming into the world lighteneth every man in whom it dwells.

It lightens us as to the realities of our own life. The first effect of the vision of God is the remembrance of one's own impurity. When we have

grasped the meaning of the union of the soul with the Ascended Redeemer, the first effect is the overwhelming sense of personal unworthiness; the second effect is the realisation that that unworthiness is not a merely personal concern, but that it is an obstruction to the present working of Christ. Our first business, we feel, is so to discipline ourselves that we may become less dull instruments for the Master's use.

That is to say, the battle with temptation and sin will reveal itself much less as struggle to avoid breaches of rules lest we incur penalty, which is what it appears from the lower plane, than the freeing of our powers, which through sin tend to become weak and ineffective. Sin is like an obscure disease which saps the vitality and renders us unfit for work and languid in all that we do. How much of the spiritual languor that is characteristic of Christian communities is to be traced to wills which are still enslaved by sin: sins of pride, of sloth, of uncharity, certainly—but less obvious forms of sin also. The sins that we are familiar with are rarely the sins that are the most injurious spiritually. We see them and we struggle with them. But the spring and beginning of the spiritual life, its power of attack, its blitheness in service, are destroyed by the dull routine of a life which is deficient in hopefulness and expectancy,

which is fundamentally pessimistic. Possible action is negated, action undertaken is made resultless, because of the hopeless spirit with which we approach the problems of spiritual living. I am convinced that where many lives fail is just in the matter of confidence that actions undertaken in response to God's call and promise will be fruitful. Does not this explain much of the fruitlessness of our Communion for example? Theoretically, we understand that the reception of the Holy Communion is the entrance into our soul of Incarnate God to deepen and strengthen the bond already existing between him and the Christian. Any deep appreciation of that belief would lead, certainly, to frequent reception of the Blessed Sacrament, and it would result in that what we see at Christmas and Easter; churches thronged with communicants would be of daily occurrence. But as a matter of fact, that is not so, and it is not so because we let our theory of the Holy Communion remain a theory and lapse into a lower appreciation of it, as the fulfilling of a Christian duty, not the meeting with Incarnate God. What we have here at the most vital point of Christian experience, we have elsewhere; we decline from the attempt to realise union and become centres of the spiritual activity of the Ascended Christ, to the routine of duty. There is nothing that crushes life more than to lead it under

the stress of duty ; it is to adopt the servant's attitude, and decline that of a friend. Life is only free and joyous when we have ceased to look at it as duty and seen it as opportunity and privilege in the glad response of all our nature to the impulses of the present Christ.

Only under such circumstances of response can the spiritual powers be really free in their activity and become, what it is their real function to be, organs of vision. It is in the free exercise of the Christian virtues that their meaning is revealed. The meaning of faith and hope and love cannot be fully perceived in their first dim and tentative efforts : but as they are exercised they not only gain in strength and sureness but they reveal their ends. God as faithful, that he is One in whom we can put faith, is revealed in the life of faith. The meaning of purity, as the medium through which we see God, is revealed as our nature gains in purity of motive. The nature of the life and work of our Lord becomes plain to us as our lives gain in intensity and sympathy with him. Our progress in the exercise of the Christian virtues is just the growth in us of the life of the Ascended with whom we are ever in union.

THE SEVENTEENTH MEDITATION

THE SEVENTEENTH MEDITATION

AND SITTETH ON THE RIGHT HAND
OF GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY

Let us listen to the words of St. Paul —

HE raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places. Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church. Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

Let us picture —

Our Lord throned in glory at the right hand of the Father. Let us worship him who in our nature so lived and overcame that that nature is thus exalted at God's right hand.

We get some glimpses of that heavenly world from the New Testament, figurative perhaps, but how wonderfully suggestive. It is not the lonely silent world of those who believe that God is a mere unity, but a world full of glowing radiant life, a life translated for us into terms of colour and music, of perfect joy and perfect peace. We understand it best perhaps when we think of it as a world of beings who realise their lives in perfect service and perfect love, untrammelled by the limitations that flesh imposes on us. If we could but know one community, one little village, anywhere, where all loved one another, and each life went out to each in eager service, would not that be like heaven? If we could know a single household where love reigned undisturbed by any irritation, any harsh judgment, any misinterpretation — could we not through that understand heaven? Now at the right hand of God our Lord is enthroned in our nature high above all created being, and all are bound to him in perfect peace and perfect love and all obey him with perfect readiness of service.

Consider, first —

That at the right hand of God our Lord is not unmindful of us; rather with his enthronement as king of the new kingdom, the church, his work for us enters a new stage. By his Incarnation and Atonement he had won the right to build a human kingdom, and from henceforth at the right hand of the Father he is creating it. We shall only understand the nature of his work if we understand aright what that kingdom, that church, is. It is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. One tries in vain to picture all that such a phrase as that may mean; but out of its meaning one gathers this impression: an impression of our Lord going out and laying hold upon human lives and uniting himself to them and bringing them into union with himself, thus extending himself, thus incarnating himself, he gradually creates, builds up, this body which is his fulness, the completion of his incarnate life. The extension of our Lord's incarnate life is the work of the mediatorial kingdom. Here, in this world, is being built up his Mystical Body. Whenever any soul is regenerated it enters upon its life of union with its Lord, which is its true life. Whenever any fallen soul receives remission of its sins it is restored to its true life in Christ. The success of the church is

its success in regenerating and renewing souls. The true progress of humanity is its inclusion in the body of Christ, that, filled with the life of the body, each one by himself may manifest that life unto the world, and show the meaning of his Risen Master.

Consider, second —

That you have been regenerated and made one with Christ and through that oneness are in possession of the powers of that kingdom which is his Body; are a part (if one may put it so) of the fulness of him who filleth all in all. This puts the life of the Christian on a divine and heavenly plane. The one thing that in the history of the church has been above all disastrous has been the failure of Christians to face squarely what being a Christian means. Let us be sure that we put away from us all thought of the Christian religion as a distant following of an example which is so perfect that we can hardly hope to attain to the imitation of some of its lesser activities, and understand that we are Christians because we are personally united to Jesus Christ, and that his life manifests itself through us in holiness of living. Our relation to our Lord now enthroned at the right hand of the Father is not that of disciples engaged in a distant contemplation of their Master, but that of members

of the Body filled with the one life of the Body which is the life of its Royal Head. It is our present concern, when we question ourselves as to our religion, to ask ourselves of its reality and its vitality: Whether this is our faith, our certainty, our experience, that we are one with Christ our Lord. The union is there, if we are really Christ's disciples; but it is so great a fact that we may never have seen it. Not only are there things so small that we cannot see them, but things too great to be seen except partially and fragmentarily. As wholes, they have to be constructed from our many partial experiences of them. What the ocean means to us in its grandeur, its infinite diversity, is the resultant of a series of experiences which we now imaginatively grasp in a single conception. And even so, we feel that the whole fact has not been made ours; but that each new day upon its shining surface, each new hour by its surf-smitten shore, adds experiences that enter into and broaden our meaning when the mood of meditation synthesises for us our whole experience. So the reality of our relation to our Blessed Lord is experienced by us in unnumbered ways: in the intimacy of our prayers, in the flashes of love that light up our times of meditation and recollection, in the sense of security that we have when we consciously place our lives in his hands, in the consolation that comes to us

whenever we bring our pain and sorrow and lay it at his feet, in the feeling of ardent strength, the consciousness of ability to go out and meet the problems of life, in all those partial and varied "graces," as we call them, which we instinctively relate to him. We have no doubt that all these are spiritual experiences and come from him. What we so often miss is the fact that these are not separate "graces," but that they are partial experiences of the underlying fact of our union with our Lord, that they are all manifestations, not of a distant power, but of his indwelling presence.

Let us, then, pray —

That we may see our Lord personally present in all the facts of our religious experience. That we may learn to recognise him in all our activity. That we may think less of his power and more of his presence.

Almighty and merciful God, unto whose everlasting blessedness we ascend, not by the frailty of the flesh, but by the activity of the soul; make us ever, by thy inspiration, to seek after the courts of the heavenly city, and, by thy mercy, confidently to enter therein; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

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The Gospels end with the Ascension of our Lord. As the cloud receives him and he vanishes out of

our sight, we close the volume with the feeling that we have followed the life of Jesus of Nazareth to its end. Once more, at the end of time, he shall appear to judge the world in righteousness; but in the meantime we have our life here to live in the faith of him. What our Bible has to tell us when we open it again at the Acts of the Apostles, is the history of the Church which is his Body and representative now. We follow the word of the angel, and stand no longer gazing up into heaven, but return to Jerusalem and the practical life of Christianity. What lies beyond the gate that was momentarily lifted to allow the King of Glory to come in and then dropped again, we little know.

And yet if we were to take up our Bibles and read them with the thought of learning as much as they tell us of the heavenly life of the Ascended Jesus, we should probably be surprised to find how much we actually are told about that life. The life of the Church is not conceived in the New Testament as it is conceived in the latest Church histories, elaborated with infinite pains by the severe application of the scientific method to the facts of primitive Christianity; rather, it is conceived as the externalisation of the constant and ever-present action of One enthroned in our nature at the Right Hand of the Father; One who, through the action of the Holy Spirit whom he has sent forth, is ex-

tending his Incarnate life by the ingathering of human souls. The things that arrest the attention of the scientific historian, the evolution and date of documents, the distribution and mode of exercise of authority, present such complicated problems for his solution just because they were not at all the centre of interest to the New Testament writers. You may write the history of any human society from many points of view; but after it has been written from one point of view it will inevitably be difficult to write it from another on the basis of the first history. The history of a British colony, written in terms of imperial experience will not lend itself very well to a reconstruction of the life of the colony in terms of social experience. So it is difficult to disentangle the actual history of the Christian Church, precisely because the writers of the primitive Christian documents were not interested about the current events of the expansion of Christianity, but viewed it altogether as the work of the Spirit in the edification of the Body of Christ. They were continually conscious of the operation of the Ascended Jesus who was at once at the Right Hand of the Father and in the midst of the Christian assembly when two or three were gathered. The life of the Body for them was not expressed in the institutions which necessarily shaped themselves as time went on; its real life was that which

was hid with Christ in God. Their centre of interest was in the renewal and growth of the new man in Christ Jesus.

Studied from the point of view of the writers, the documents of the early Church have much to say of the present life and action of the Incarnate and Ascended Son of God. Briefly, for we have not time to enter into the details of the Ascended Life, he is the King of the Mediatorial Kingdom, he is our Lord and Ruler; and—the point that I want to make just now—the object of his rule is human freedom, to free men from the power of sin, to confer upon them the glorious liberty of the Children of God.

The primary defect, from the religious point of view, of the natural man, is that he is not free. His life and conduct is the resultant of many forces. His heredity has moulded him into a certain shape, transmitting to him the characters of remote ancestors; he is the creature of the past, both in body and mind. His environment has subjected him to the action of forces which have so influenced him that when he comes to years of discretion and is called upon to make choice in life, he finds that he has already acquired habits which largely direct and control his choice. More than all, he is possessed of a will which is under the bondage of sin. In every moment of his living his past is present

and active, so that in the presence of new and admired ideals he yet finds that he cannot do the thing that he would, and cries out in his agony, in his exceeding need :—"Who shall save me from this body of death?"

And then the answer comes, the answer of experience :—"Thought Jesus Christ our Lord." From him, living, risen, ascended, comes freedom.

It turns out, when we examine the documents of our religion, that the thing that man is ever pursuing under the name of freedom, is not freedom at all. Man conceives freedom as the ability to do what he wants to do and thereby gets into difficulties with the metaphysician, and psychologist, and even the physicist, on the question of free will. But the question as it presents itself to the average man, "Can one do what one wants to do?" is of little importance. The real question is, "What can one want to do?" Is the man free to want, and so to attain, a certain kind of life? For the essence of Christian freedom is ability to attain the ideal ends set before us by Christ. Am I in that sense, free?

And certainly we must say that "by nature" we are not so free. The Christian ideal for us is that we shall become the sons of God, and through the participation in the Incarnation of the Eternal Son become partakers of the Divine nature. We are called into union with God so that the end of our

life is to be divinised. Freedom, to the Christian, means freedom to attain that life of union, and grow up in Christ to its ultimate and presently inconceivable results. Such freedom as that is the gift of God. The inclination towards it is the outcome of the divine election in consequence of which, through the operation of the Holy Spirit, the Father draws us. That operation is universal in as much as the Father willeth all men to be saved; but there is no universal response even to such a wonderful offer as that of freedom.

The Incarnation of the Son of God, then, revealed the purpose of man's creation, and set plainly before him for the first time the wonder of his possible destiny. The present action of the Incarnate Son throned at the Right Hand of the Father communicates the sustaining power which enables us to grow up in him and thus attain the fulness of his promise. We are made free by our incorporation in the Son and the action of the Holy Spirit upon us. But though this freedom is ours from the time of our regeneration we do not realise the fruits of it without struggle. The gift of freedom is not a gift of sinlessness or of immunity from temptation. We are not given the completeness of the redeemed life, but the power to attain it. The natural man acts in response to the pressure of life, with little choice, following the line of the least resistance.

The spiritual man enters a period of struggle where he has consciously to choose between the service of God and the denial of that service—between the ideals of the Christian life and social ideals, which he finds in vogue in his environment. This involves a period of struggle, a struggle that is not completely emerged from so long as life lasts, but which through the exercise of his freedom may result in the definite choice of God and in the realisation of himself as the son of God.

One of the great dangers that beset the Christian is lest we shall conceive of the ideal of the Christian life in a narrow and partial way. Men are continually conceiving of Christianity as concerning parts or sections of life. This results in blocking life out in spheres of action labelled "religious" and "secular," and ends with the reference of only a part of the life to God. God is conceived as being concerned with "religion" while the part of life that is not docketed "religious" is "secular" and may be conducted in accordance with secular conventions. This, at any rate seems to be the only explanation of a good deal of the conduct of business. Men whose religion would seem to be quite sincere, if not very intelligent, take part in business transactions which are very difficult to square with the Ten Commandments, to say nothing of the Gospel teaching. They appear in their

places in church on Sunday after a week spent in transactions that one finds it difficult to differentiate from pure gambling, or after pushing their business by advertisements that one cannot call by any milder name than lies, quite as though their week-day actions had been normal from the Christian standpoint. It is notorious that the social life of America is filled with practices that are indefensible from the ground of Christian morals. One need only instance the widespread gambling and the utter disregard of the obligations of the Lord's Day ; yet the men and women who participate in such practices would be insulted if one were to intimate that they were not good Christians. It is difficult to understand what they mean by Christianity, till one discovers that there is somewhere a small section of life that they regard as religious. In some obscure cupboard there is a little set of rules, the chief of which seems to be having a pew in some church and receiving the Holy Communion once or twice a year. It is a long way from a life that is hid with Christ in God, and whose conversation is in heaven, to a life that expresses its relation to the Ascended King in a few petty observances, or adherence to a few moral maxims, which very likely are not Christian at all. The trouble is that men who conceive Christianity as a set of more or less burdensome oppressions, will never progress to a

higher stage. In this attitude of mind humanity is like horse and mule which must be held by bit and bridle because there is no other way of getting him on. The Christian life is experience, and ought early to pass beyond the childish stage of observance to the free life of the child of God—a life which only feels the pressure of law when it falls below its own conception of living. That is the point St. Paul makes over and over again. All that difficult and uninteresting argument of his (so men find it) about the law, is perfectly intelligible and helpful if we remember that what he is protesting against is the attempt to formulate life as a set of rules—protesting that Christianity is not this, and loses its true character when so conceived. If one is a Christian one is in another sphere, one is beyond interest in things with which rules deal—Law is made for the unrighteous.

Life is all religious, or it is all secular. Secular things do not transform life to secularity, and release it when it ceases to touch them, so that by another set of occupations it becomes religious. The man himself, by virtue of the whole direction of his life, is first of all religious or secular, and then imparts his own character to his occupations. He eliminates, necessarily, that which is anti-Christian; but he fills with his own spirit and purpose and raises to the level of Christian service all

that he finds it possible for a Christian to do. His work, whatever it is, becomes the medium of his self-expression; his work does not dominate him and drag him down to the level of its materiality, but he dominates it and raises it to the height of his own spirituality. If there is anything that cannot be done in a Christian way, it ought not to be done by a Christian man. Our Lord taught once for all that a man is not defiled by the things he touches and handles, but that he can impart his own inner uncleanness to the most useful and innocent things.

But, it is objected, such a conception of life leads to mere lawlessness; it is impossible to live without rules; one must know what one's obligations are, what is to be done and what avoided. But the very point is that we can never know in any complete sense what is to be done and what avoided by a system of rules. If we learn it at all we must learn it in some other way. The attempt to cover life by rule simply ends in the creation of a system of ever increasing elaboration till you find all simplicity and spontaneity of life stifled in the endlessly increasing meshes of some Lilliputian web. There is a certain class of society which believes that manners can be created by the study of books of etiquette, and that you may learn how to foster love from a complete letter writer. The same sort

of mind would imagine that one could live a spiritual life by daily continuance in "pious practices." There are books for these, too. But if we love one another we find means of expressing our love without recourse to the ladies who preside over the appropriate columns in the newspaper. And if we love God we shall find the love discovering appropriate means of expression in life. If we love God so that our lives go out in devoted service to him, we shall find that this love creates the appropriate form of services and furnishes its own tests. Our Lord's rule, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God and thy neighbour as thyself, actually covers life with its broad sweep; in the light of it we may live, but the attempt to schematise it before hand and deduce all the instances that may fall under it, lands one in an unaimable Phariseeism. Take but the one case that I mentioned above, the observance of Sunday; the attempt to say what can be done and cannot be done on Sunday leads us in the absurdities of a Sabbath day journey; leaves us asking endless questions about work and amusement, till we sink into a merely pettifogging state of mind—the state of mind of a conscienceless lawyer trying to invent a way to commit a crime without coming into contact with a statute. But what we are dealing with is not a statute within the letter of which we must, at all costs, remain, but with a

loving Father who has indicated a method of spiritual growth to his child. Religiously (not socially) considered, if you do not want to express anything through the observance of commandments, I do not see that it makes any difference whether you do or do not observe them. The point of this is that they afford means of spiritual expression, and if you cannot find that, it would not appear of much use to chaffer as to the allowability of motoring or tennis. And if the Lord's Day is an opportunity that you have found, the petty weighings of pros and cons in relation to some form of work or amusement will not occur.

Our Lord's ideal of life for us is expressed in the principles which underlie his teaching and are exemplified in his life. This teaching as it comes to us in the Gospel appeals to men as being very difficult of appropriation. That is due for one thing to the fact that I have been insisting upon, that it is not confined to rules of evident application and that therefore they cannot be obeyed, but only *lived*. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, looks easy and definite, whatever may be the actual facts about it. But that the Sabbath is made for man, not man for the Sabbath, seems hopelessly vague as a principle of life. Yet it is the latter that is vitally useful as pointing the way of spiritual opportunity. Thou shalt not kill or steal, is, no

doubt, plain and definite, but also barren in the realm of the Spirit; while, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, is unendingly fruitful. After he had kept the commandments from his youth up, the rich young ruler was still asking what he should do to inherit eternal life, so little that was vital had they taught him. If his experience had been that he had loved the Lord his God with all his heart and all his mind and all his strength, and his neighbour as himself, he might have met our Lord's test differently. To live by Christian principles means to have found in them the way of expressing the relation that is between your soul and God. They exist, not because they are arbitrarily imposed, but because they are the most appropriate form for the expression of our sonship, because the living of the life of union with the Ascended Christ naturally falls in to these forms.

It is, no doubt, as men complain, difficult to live the Sermon on the Mount. But its difficulty is not where it is assumed to be. It is difficult as one more set of rules—to insist perhaps overmuch on that point. It is difficult when approached from the outside. But there is no *command* to be humble or peaceful or merciful. There is simply the statement that such states of soul are blessed. They do not tell us how to acquire a certain character; they merely tell us that a character of that kind is

blessed of God—blessed of him because it is the reproduction of the Incarnate life of his Son. We, by our awkwardness, impose a difficulty upon it. We try to acquire one or another of its virtues piecemeal; we try to impose the patch of humility upon the old garment of our unchanged life. The attempt produces an appearance of artifice which you are no more likely to mistake for a Christian virtue than you are the carefully painted face of a woman for the work of nature. If you see grapes on thistles you know they did not grow there. If you went to hear the overture to the Meistersinger and nothing was played but the trombone parts you would not come away filled with joy. So we suspect humility if it is not accompanied by peacefulness and mercy and the rest. But when once one has started at the beginning, and is humbly trying to love God and live by the life of Christ, then the Beatitudes turn out to be the natural expression of that life. I do not mean that in all stages of Christian development we shall find self-expression in those terms easy. But we shall find that the Christian life naturally expresses itself through them so far as it has gone. It will proceed on those lines and not on other lines; in all stages we shall find there what we should expect—the perfect expression of what we imperfectly are.

We grow up, but we grow up in accordance with a certain pattern—a pattern shown us on a Mount.

Men to-day are becoming intensely interested in the moral failure of modern society, and well they may be. But in their efforts to better things they have gone hopelessly wrong. They are busy drawing up new morals, that is, new sets of rules, founded on science or social experience or what not. They expect to succeed in reforming society by the exertion of some sort of educational pressure on life, when the real trouble is with the quality of the life itself. I read in the newspaper this morning an account of an enthusiastic gentleman who is preparing to cure the tramp evil by showing children moving pictures of tramps. It seems not to have occurred to him that the only people who will care very much about avoiding vice are, not the people who see its hideousness, but the people who have gotten in some way to love virtue. It seems not to occur to the makers of new rules that their real difficulty will not be in drawing up admirable codes, but in getting anybody to love them. I cannot imagine falling in love with a medical maxim about purity. I cannot even imagine falling in love with a Christian maxim about humility—in fact few people do—they mostly hate such maxims. But I can imagine falling in love with the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ

and ardently desiring so to give myself to him that his life shall be manifest in my body as purity and humility and charity. And this was the method of appeal of the first followers of our Lord, was it not? The first disciples did not set about obeying him; they set about loving him; and their conduct is the result of possessing and being possessed by his mind; being possessed by that, their lives were transformed to be like his life.

And being so possessed they did not will anything other than he willed; they had achieved the only perfect freedom—the freedom to be conformed to the life of God's Son and attain the end for which they were created. Their lives could not expand in the same degree as his human life—checks and hindrances there might still be—but their faces were set toward the city and they were certain with him to attain. They did not see pain and sorrow and suffering abolished for them, any more than we do; but they saw Jesus their Head made perfect through the sufferings of the way they were following, crowned and exalted to the Right Hand of God; and they felt that in union with him they were sure of the same triumph. It is well to note the certainty that the triumph of Jesus inspired in his followers, how negligible a thing their present experience of pain seems to them in comparison with their certain share in his

triumph. One of the most disturbing things about average Christianity is the constant tendency to make its own small experience a standard of judgment upon life, rather than the experience of its Ascended Head. Our sufferings bring into our lives a tone of discouragement, of doubt of the actuality of the rule of our Lord in the world. Every pain and grief and disaster seems to men to throw doubt on either the goodness of the existence of God. But turn to an earlier point of view. We read in the Acts of the Martyrs, not once or twice, this note of time: These things happened in such a year, "in the reign of Christ." Here were men setting down the cruel fate of their fellow Christians, men and women and children whom they had known and loved and whose death by fire or sword or wild beasts they had just witnessed. They are recounting the death by torture of one whose only offence was that he was a worshipper of Christ. And they show no mark of surprise that this should happen "in the reign of Christ." What does it mean but that Christ was also reigning in them? That they were so conscious of their union with him that it was altogether natural to them that they should re-enact his experience? But the experience cast no shadow of doubt upon his reign.

Surely, this is normal to the Christian life—that it is certain first of all, of being Christ-possessed,

of seeking its true end in permitting the Christ experience to be renewed in it. Jesus reigns. And he reigns not *over* the Christian, but *in* him. Our lives are knit closer and closer to him, and as he masters them more and more, so they become freer and freer. Temptation ceases to appeal; sin loses its attractive power; the call of the world sounds fainter and fainter; and finally the child of God emerges the master of life, free forever to grow into the full likeness of his Father,

THE EIGHTEENTH MEDITATION

THE EIGHTEENTH MEDITATION

FROM THENCE HE SHALL COME TO
JUDGE THE QUICK AND THE DEAD

Listen to the words of the Scriptures —

BEHOLD, he cometh with clouds, and every
eye shall see him.

Let us try to picture —

The coming of our Lord to judgment. The elements of the scene are given us in Holy Scripture. The essential thing is that our Lord will be revealed to *us*—that Lord whom we have continually thought of, and who has been the life of all our spiritual experience. This is he to whom we have addressed our prayers; he whom we have called on for help in all our necessities. The thought of his love and

his mercy has encouraged us when we have been deeply conscious of our own failure. In moments of despair, when we have been tempted to abandon all further effort, it has been the thought of his promise not to cast off any that come to him that has made it possible for us to go on. This is he who has stood by us in our sorrows; he it is with whom we have had moments of intimate communion, wherein our souls have heard his voice and been conscious of his guidance. This is he whom we have received in our communions, when we seemed taken up into his life and held close in his arms. This is he, Jesus, the Saviour! There have perhaps been moments when we looked forward to the judgment as a dreadful thing; but when it comes, it will come as the revelation of a friend: it is one whom we have long and intimately known that we shall meet face to face. Why should we picture to ourselves the terrors of the judgment? Why not rather picture it as the joy that fills the souls of those who have at length attained the end for which they have been striving? Why not think of eager welcome, with the joyous greeting, "Well done"? Is it that we are conscious of the imperfection of our work? Imperfection there doubtless is and will be; but for the Christian who has tried to make his life a life of manifestation and service, it is not the imperfection that will count, but the

fidelity to vocation. There is too much of fear in our thought of our Lord. Let us picture the judgment as the realisation of all that we have wished for and tried to be.

Consider, first —

That we are all the time preparing for the judgment; that is, preparing to meet our Lord face to face in his manifested glory. We are consciously preparing; or, unconsciously, life is preparing us. If we are consciously preparing it is through the cultivation of the friendship of Jesus. We are growing in likeness to him; growing to think his thoughts and to look out upon life with his eyes. The inner secret of friendship is sympathy; and if we are growing into his friendship, we are deepening our sympathy with him, and growing to know even as we are known. We read our Gospels and find within us a ready understanding of the words of Jesus, an eager response to his will. Our lives shape themselves more and more in harmony with his, and we find that our self-expression is in terms of his teaching. This is that forming of Christ in us of which St. Paul speaks. This is that process of which St. John tells, of which the outcome is that "we shall be like him." Consider that the judgment is the unveiling of the results of this process, the bringing to light of the achieved like-

ness—or unlikeness. If we are like him, the thought of judgment is full of joy because it is the time of the discovery of the likeness: and having waked up after his likeness we shall be satisfied with it.

Consider, second —

Whether your life bears the marks of this conformity to the life of your Redeemer. The test is whether you are being attracted to that life as that which expresses best the ardent desires of your soul. We are revealed through our admirations; we are made known by the direction of our movement. Have you so sincere an admiration of the Christ-life that your life moves towards it, deserting all other ideals? Or is your admiration of that life just a mental attitude adopted under the influence of the expressed thought of Christendom, but containing no original contribution from yourself? The judgment will be the unveiling of your real relation to our Blessed Lord. It will be the final testing of the superstructure that you have been erecting upon the foundation of your Christian profession — whether “gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble.” Consider the judgment as the testing of your life’s labour and achievement—that accomplishment of which, perhaps, you are to-day rather proud. Think of the horror of seeing all that consumed in the fire of the judgment, judged unfit

for the Master's use. Consider it, burning away and leaving your life without fruit. But what will be the joy of seeing the gleam of the gold and the flash of the jewels as they emerge from the fire, uninjured! Imagine the gladness of the welcome: "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

Let us, then, pray —

To prepare ourselves for the return of our Lord, as servants who watch. Watch therefore, for ye know not the hour. Pray for such love of our Lord as shall lead us out eagerly to welcome him at his coming.

Make us, we beseech thee, O Lord our God, watchful and heedful in awaiting the coming of thy Son Christ, our Lord; that when he shall come and knock, he may find us not sleeping in sins, but awake, and rejoicing in his praises; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

O Christ our God, who wilt come to judge the world in the Manhood which thou hast assumed, we pray thee to sanctify us wholly, that in the day of thy coming our whole spirit, soul and body may so revive to a fresh life in thee, that we may live and reign with thee forever.

The thought of judgment, whether of the world at the consummation of this age, or of the individual soul at death, has exercised ceaseless fascination upon the mind of man; he has exhausted all the resources of his artistic nature in the effort to present his thought of it. It has been presented as the piteous pleading of naked souls shivering in their loneliness, their helplessness, their consciousness of guilt, before the stern tribunal of an offended God. It has been depicted with an eye to the dramatic contrast between the joy of the saved and the despair of the lost—the saved are welcomed by rejoicing angels to the glories of heaven, the lost dragged by exultant demons to the torture of hell. All that the brush of the painter, the pen of the poet, the eloquence of the orator, can do has been done to impress us with the terror of the judgment. And men have shuddered before the painted walls, they have felt their very souls freeze as they turned the pages of the poets, they have writhed in agony under the eloquence of the orators, and yet, I think, there has been perceptible all along the feeling that such presentations of the judgment were inadequate to the fact; not in that the powers of man are too feeble to grasp such a fact in its entirety, but in that the very essence of the judgment has been misconceived.

It is one of the very hopeful things about human

nature as it has been influenced by the Gospel, that as we stand before the artistic conception of the judgment, we are moved to sympathy for the lost. We do not ask very much about the angels that lead saved souls along the lily-bordered paths of Paradise; but our hearts are filled with tears as the desolate souls are led away to their torture. We feel, I think, that the essential fact of the judgment escapes us under such symbolism, and that if it is ever to be intelligible, or, indeed, credible to us, the symbols must be changed. All the laughter of demons, all the tortures of the lost, all the triumph over human disaster and failure, must pass from the picture before we can at all understand it as expressing the relation of God to a lost soul. Each age will, no doubt, create its own symbolic presentation of the essential fact, or its own interpretation of the Gospel imagery, but as man spiritually advances he finds that the symbol of another age is inadequate to the expression of his own thought and experience. It is only truth that is eternal, and we must beware of confounding truth with its symbolic expression.

One of the primary mistakes, one feels, in much that one finds expressed about the judgment, is the admission of a certain arbitrary element to it. Our experience of human administration of justice inevitably contains this element. Its data are imper-

fect, its premises are uncertain, its judgments may be set aside for reasons which have nothing to do with the guilt or innocence of the criminal. We see the criminal escape the penalty of his crime through the mere favour of governing powers. Mercy shows itself to us as pity refusing to impose penalty. And we carry this conception over to the divine administration of the world. We conceive the fate of the world as the enforcement of a penalty that mercy might in any case decline to enforce. Whereas, that is not and cannot be the method of the divine justice. God does not inflict punishment upon the sinner. It is not true that my sin may be pardoned if God, so to say, can be found in the mood of mercy.

Human justice looks at the act committed and pays small attention to the consciousness of the offender—that is outside the reach of its knowledge; but in the divine justice the act is relatively unimportant, the mind of the actor is all important. The essence of the divine judgment is that it displays what a man is; it imposes nothing. It is not a blind inflictor of penalty for deeds done, but the manifestation of a state of soul in relation to God.

The article of the Creed with which we are concerned has to do with the final judgment; that judgment which takes place at the end of the Mediatorial Kingdom of our Lord, when he shall have

subdued all things and delivered them to the Father. But we must remember that there is another judgment which more immediately concerns us—the particular judgment, which takes place at death. The general judgment is the display of the results of our Lord's Incarnate work, and not the decision of the fate of souls which have, till then, waited in suspense. The particular judgment is the display of the results of one's own individual life, in relation to the opportunities given by God. I should suppose that we might say of this judgment that it is the revelation of a man to himself; the reaping of the harvest that he has sown. I cannot conceive that anyone should dissent from that judgment, because it is not the imposition of penalty, but the recognition of facts as they are. I cannot conceive the possibility of a reversal of that judgment; one can appeal from a penalty, a punishment imposed, but one cannot appeal from a state of soul, from a spiritual nature that we have chosen to make what it now actually is. The state of the soul at any time must depend upon its capacity. Heaven can only be revealed to a soul that has capacity to receive it.

From time to time this perception of the spiritual inequalities of the human lot and the obvious incapacity of many for spiritual knowledge and enjoyment has led to the development of theories of a future probation for those who seem to us to have

failed here ; an extension, in other words, of opportunity for choice which seems to have been inadequately offered in this life. It is assumed that if probation is sufficiently extended all men will ultimately make choice of God. One can only say that there is nothing in the Christian Religion to encourage such a notion, nor do I know of anything in the nature of the case that seems to make it needful. It rests on the assumption that the probation offered men here is inadequate. But inadequate for what? It is true that the opportunities of this life, as far as we can judge of them, are inadequate in many cases to enable souls to develop into a life of sanctity—to grow into the purity which is the medium of the vision of God. If it is needful that all men in this life shall acquire that capacity in order to see God at any time, then we might infer that the divine justice implied a second probation, or an extension of the present. But Catholic Christianity has never so conceived the case. Catholic Christianity has ever taught that a lost soul is one that, of full knowledge and determinate will, has rejected God in whatsoever form and under whatsoever conditions he has presented himself to it. It has not thought of failure to find God as being fatal, but of rejection of him when found. The theology of Catholic Christianity leaves ample room for the growth of ignorant and immature souls. It is only

when that theology is rejected that the pressure of the facts of human life seems to compel the thought of some further opportunity. But renewed opportunity can only mean opportunity for one or two things:—Either opportunity for God to gain more complete knowledge of the soul, which can hardly be what is meant; or opportunity for the soul to gain more complete knowledge of God. This is no doubt what is meant. But such opportunity is, by Catholic teaching, afforded by the Middle State in the case of all who are imperfect, but still in possession of the necessary spiritual capacity; and in the case of those who have rejected God and destroyed their spiritual capacity, it would be fruitless. We may reasonably hope that the number of those will be small; but the Christian revelation is clear that there will be some. For these a second probation would be useless; for others, unnecessary.

Let us try to look at the particular judgment, less as a matter of theological statement, and more as an intimate and personal thing. I suppose most persons decline to think of it at all, or think of it only with dread. This can only rest, so far as it is rational, and not merely emotional, on a feeling of the uncertainty of what will happen. Now the unexpected is precisely the element that, as Christians, we ought to be able to eliminate. There is surely no need that any Christians should be so ignorant

of their religion and of their own conduct as not to know whether they are saved or no. The Christian certainly knows what his religion requires of him. As certainly he knows of his manifold imperfections. He must also know whether his repentance is sincere and his attempt to serve our Lord is wholehearted. If he knows these things, he knows that he is saved, and that death will not bring him the surprise of final rejection from the presence of God. But while so much would seem to be plain, surely no Christian can be satisfied with so much. So much, indeed, implies the existence of much more. It implies that we have conceived life in terms of the life of our Lord. It implies, not the shrinking from the thought of death and all that it will introduce us to, but a certain detachment from this life, and a readiness, even eagerness, for the future. It is true that our proper fulfilling of the duties of this life requires a feeling of their worth and permanence. We shall not be the better Christians for declining them or underrating them. But we shall be the better Christians if we estimate them from the point of view of their effect upon us as the children of God, whose real life must be completed elsewhere. The vividness with which the saint desires to depart and be with Christ is not to be expected of the still immature Christian; but neither is it to be expected of him that he will so cling to

this world that death will seem to him the last disaster. To be with Christ "is far better," and we must surely feel it so, if the vital interests of our lives are the interests of the spiritual man in Christ Jesus; if our dominant interests are the forwarding of his work and of his kingdom. If such are in reality our interests, then the meeting with our Lord at the judgment following death can only mean the entrance into a broader and more perfect life, where the powers of the Spirit which here function with difficulty under material limitations, shall find field for their exercise and growth in his nearer presence. If those moments of prayer and communion when we have felt his presence and his love revealed in our souls have been the most precious of our experiences, the memory of which has been treasured as foretastes of the glory that shall be revealed, then the thought of a state in which these are but shadows of a normal experience, but divine hints of constant joys, will cause us to face the future with confidence and gladness.

The Day of Judgment is for each one of us a day of revealing, "when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed." Then will the true meaning of our life become evident. It would seem to be a well established fact of observation that many, perhaps most, human beings are profoundly ignorant of the actual tendencies of their lives. Just as you shall often

see a girl, through association, acquiring a tone of vulgarity of which she is unknowing, is, indeed, mistaking it for something else—for a frank manner, a friendliness of speech; so you shall see a life falling into all manner of sin, so it be not gross sin—sins of uncharity, of spiritual indifference, of pride, of scorn of religious restraints,—while mistakenly supposing that it is merely exercising the liberty that belongs to all human beings. A man says, “I am not a sinner; or, at least, if I am not perfect, I do not do much that can offend God”; when it is evident that God and the relation of his soul to God, do not occupy his thought at all. He would deny any opposition to religion, but his whole life is apart from religion, is profoundly irreligious. The character that he is forming has no contact with things of spiritual value. It is terrible to think of the multitudes of men and women one meets to-day to whom, so far as any practical thought or action of life is concerned, this world is all the world there is. In certain cases one understands it. Anyone who has worked among the very poor, whose life means unceasing labour amid the most adverse conditions for the mere support of existence, realises that anything more than the most elementary religious beliefs and practices, if even so much as that, is out of the question; nothing more can be found possible in families living in two or three rooms in tene-

ments, amid squalid conditions, and where the hours that are not hours of work are hours of weariness. In such cases what the light of the judgment will reveal must be, not so much souls hardened in sin—though there has been much sin of an ill-appearing sort—as souls stunted and dwarfed by the life that they have experienced. But there are other strata of society where life shows, not an almost forced neglect of the Gospel through the difficulty of conditions, but a scornful rejection of the Gospel through impatience of restraint. “Fulness of bread” would seem to be the account of much modern, as of much ancient, sinning. Those crowds that fill fashionable restaurants after the theatre and opera, that roll past in endless streams of motors in places of fashionable parade, that crowd certain summer resorts in the frantic pursuit of pleasure, spending incredible thousands upon a single entertainment, those whose life’s motto is amusement, in the pursuit of which they pass avidly from one palling pleasure to another—these are not following their path of life in ignorance of the law of God. They have, for the most part, been brought up in the knowledge of the Gospel; they have been prepared for confirmation and have made their first communion; nay, they even now, are found from time to time within the walls of our churches. But their whole lives are in revolt from the ideals of spiritual

religion which they wave aside as "narrow" and "puritanical." Their characteristic is that they hate the Cross with its restrictions upon their appetites and passions; their lives are in open revolt from the Crucified with whose sign they have been signed.

What can the judgment mean to souls that have lived and died as these, but the stupefying revelation of their utter failure to create a character with eternal possibilities? What can the vision of the Judge be, but the sight of one habitually neglected and scorned, whose face bears the marks of their buffets, and whose brows are torn with the sharpness of the thorns wherewith they have crowned him? What more horrible fate could befall them than *to see themselves* One feels that, in any case, to see oneself as through God's eyes, as we must see ourselves at the Judgment, will be a terrible thing, even if we have chosen to live for God and have made the attempt to serve him. There will still be the revelation of the imperfection of that choice, and the feebleness of that service. We shall see our reservations in favour of self, our indulgence and half-heartedness, our shrinking from self-surrender and our sloth. We shall see how much more ready we are to ask of God than to give to God. There is no saint but must shrink from the thought of "hidden things" coming to the light—things hidden because of his own self-blindness.

But that is a small thing compared with the revelation that one's whole life has been a blunder, a misreading of values, because of the obstinacy of self-will.

At any moment of our lives we may be summoned before the judgment-seat. Always the account is ready for us, is made up; always we are what we are, and the judgment is but the statement of that fact. We are at any moment what we have chosen to be—and we actually have chosen. From the possible ideals of life we have picked out one that is ours. We may not be conscious of the choice; we may seem to ourselves to have been pushed to the choice we have made rather by the pressure of circumstances than by our own deliberate will. We may seem to ourselves to have been dragged to the place where we are by the net of environment which we could not escape. But that is not the fact; we have chosen; no one can be other, spiritually, than he wills to be. Physically, we may have been defeated by circumstances and compelled to live where and how we would not; but there is no possibility of such spiritual disaster. Whatever the outward setting of the life, it can there love God and abide in him. Nothing can separate us from the love of God, and if we have chosen that love we abide safely in it. The judgment can only reveal the existing fact.

We shall face, then, at the judgment, the revelation of our own true selves; and if we have lived the life of the Christian, we face the judgment without fear. Faltering may have been our obedience, imperfect is our accomplishment, responding far below our opportunity to the grace given to us, as we shall certainly recognise as we stand abashed and trembling before one whom we have variously disappointed; but all that, one thinks, only passingly; for all other feelings must be lost in the comprehension of his unfailing love. Whatever else is true of us, this is surprisingly true, that we have loved him, and all else is pardoned to those who have loved much. "There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." It is the great consolation of our Creed that we believe that *he* shall come to judge the quick and the dead. We shall stand at the judgment-seat of one "who loved us, and gave himself for us."

It is ill with us when we say these words as a threat hanging over us; as embodying an inevitable fact, but a fact that has nothing of cheer. When that is true we enroll ourselves among those for whom "there remains only a fearful looking for of judgment." As we read the record of the early Church we hear the sound of a different note; to them the coming of our Lord in judgment was a thought full of hope and joy. Yes, they hoped for

the judgment; it was their chief consolation that they trusted to our Lord would come soon. His coming was to them the promise of deliverance. They bore cheerfully oppression and persecution in the thought that the triumphant Lord would soon be revealed from heaven, and their sufferings would cease. So their attitude was one of expectant watchfulness. As the shadows of the evening fell, they thought that the darkness of the night might be shattered by the sound of the trumpet that should herald his appearing. When the dawn came, they looked eagerly eastward to see if it were the dawn that runs before the Sun of Righteousness. As the years passed what they experienced was, not relief at the delay of the coming of judgment, but the sadness of hope deferred. But they learned slowly to substitute for the thought of his coming to them, the thought of their going to him. When life here ended it would be that their tired eyes would open to the vision of their Saviour-Judge.

The centuries, and the weakness of our faith, have removed from us this sense of expectancy. That is not well. The Coming is imminent to each of us. A few years more or less—what does it matter? Let us watch as those who wait for the coming of the Bridegroom—watch with our loins girded and our lamps burning. For, surely, he will come! How or when we do not know, but we wait,

expecting. The years pass, and we know that he is drawing nearer. The shadows creep across the sky and quench the light of this world, but there is a light beyond the hills that is unquenchable; and when the shadows close here, the light breaks there. "He turneth the shadow of death into the morning."

Lo! as some venturer, from his stars receiving
Promise and presage of sublime emprise,
Wears evermore the seal of his believing
Deep in the dark of solitary eyes,—
So, even I, and with a heart more burning,
So, even I, and with a hope more sweet,
Groan for the hour, O Christ, of thy returning,
Faint for the flaming of thine Advent feet.

THE NINETEENTH MEDITATION

THE NINETEENTH MEDITATION

I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY GHOST

Let us listen to the words of Scripture —

AND there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

Let us try to picture to ourselves —

This scene in Jerusalem where the Apostles are gathered on the first Whitsunday. They have been waiting in obedience to our Lord's command for the coming of the gift that he had promised them. It is not at all likely that they understood the nature of the promised gift, but they wait. Day after day goes by and there is nothing. And then, this morning, the sound as of a rushing mighty wind, and the appearance of the flame. See them as the fire

hovers over their heads. There is a moment, perhaps, of awe-hushed silence, and they begin to speak. These unlearned and ignorant men speak boldly and clearly; and the crowd that had been watching gradually realises that every man present, whatever his nation or language, is understanding the words that they speak. Plainly, too, there is something emotional in the utterance of the Apostles; they are carried on by a power that is not their own so that men think that they are beside themselves. "These men are full of new wine," they mock. There is the common division of crowds—the division between those who want to understand, to learn, and those who are scornful of the unusual. See this division mirrored on the faces of the multitude; the intent looks of some, the derisive looks of the mockers. Then the afflatus passes, and St. Peter arises to preach that first wonderful Christian sermon. Listen to St. Peter saying, "Jesus hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear."

Consider, first —

That these men upon whom the Spirit came had been prepared by our Lord for this which had come to pass. They were the chosen followers of Jesus. They had already been commissioned to carry on his work. But, as he left them, they were quite

incapable of taking up that work, and indeed, we find it hard to conceive that they even understood in any adequate way, what the real nature of the work was. Even when we think of them as possessing much more of our Lord's teaching than is recorded in the Gospel, even if we take the liberty of filling those days between the Resurrection and the Ascension, that our records leave almost a blank, with more of intercourse with our Lord than seems at all likely to have taken place, it still remains that we find in them little trace of any expectancy of taking up such a work as the conversion of the world. The stupendous nature of the task that lay before them must have grown upon them by degrees in any case. And assuming as much teaching as you like, it still remains that they were only taught, and the gulf between teaching and action in such a case is tremendous. If they were to act effectively they needed some impulse that mere teaching would not have supplied, which could not, indeed, have been supplied by the memory of the past. The significance of Pentecost is that it supplied this impulse—it gave them the presence in them and action on them of God the Holy Ghost. Henceforth they are men spirit-filled. Their words ring with a certainty, their actions have an unhesitating boldness, that would be utterly surprising to us were we not so familiar with the cause. There

is in them no trace of tentative action or doubtful experiment. They go about their world-conquering business with a courageous certainty, a disregard of consequences, which is the indication of minds in which there is no shadow of doubt as to, not only the general nature of their work, but as to the practical steps by which it is to be conducted. The coming of the Holy Spirit has changed them into other men.

Consider, second —

That the gift of the Spirit was not a temporary one for the supply of the necessities of the Apostles. The gift of the Spirit is a perpetual gift to the whole Church. He came as the Spirit of guidance to lead the Church into all truth. This work was not accomplished once for all in the direction given to Apostolic lives. The Church has to be guided into the truth in each generation, guided to the solution of the new questions that each generation presents. There will never be an end of the need of the Spirit's guidance till the end of the Kingdom come. And a part of that guidance is the guidance of the individual Christian to the appropriation and use of so much of the truth as is sufficient for his needs. We expect not only that the Church will be guided to meet successfully the problems raised in the course of its attempt to conquer the world for

Christ ; but we expect that our own individual problems will find their solution through the presence in us of the same Spirit. Indeed, as the Church cannot do its work apart from us, its work is, in a way, dependent upon our response to the impulses of the Spirit. We need, then, ever to be seeking the guidance of the Spirit in the intimate details of our own lives ; to review those lives constantly in the light of his inspired teaching ; to seek through his guidance to find the mind of Christ ; to review in the interior light of his leading all our thoughts and actions, doing nothing except it first be submitted to him. To be led of the Spirit is the aspiration of the Christian's life.

Let us, then, pray —

That we may submit ourselves utterly to the guidance of the Holy Ghost. Pray that you may be filled with the spirit of obedience. Pray that you may never resist his will.

O God, forasmuch as without thee, we are not able to please thee ; mercifully grant that thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts ; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

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Our belief in the Holy Ghost is belief in a Person who is God and who from all eternity has been God ; not created, not begotten, but proceeding from

the Father and the Son, the Third Person of the Adorable and Ever-Blessed Trinity. It is belief that this Person who is Lord and Life-Giver, works and has worked in the world as creative and constructive power, both in the realm of the natural and of the spiritual, being in both the principle of order, of life and of illumination. It is belief that we, through our incorporation into the Body of Christ, are, in a way that was impossible before the Incarnation, brought into relation to the life of God the Holy Trinity, and are become subject to the action of the Holy Spirit who has become to us an immediate source of inspiration and energy. Our souls are cleansed and stimulated by him, our minds are illumined, our consciences are directed, and our very bodies are become his temples. He interprets the mind of God to us.

In this meditation, of course, I shall not be able to do more than touch on one or two aspects of the work of the Holy Spirit, and that very cursorily. The position that our profession of belief in him holds in the Creed suggests that we do not at all touch on the work of the Spirit as it is revealed in creation and the general guidance of the world and man, but rather confine ourselves to his work in connection with the Body of Christ, his revealing and illuminating work in those who are members of the Body.

There is a group of sayings of our Lord which were intended to prepare his followers for the change in the method of the divine action which would result from the removal from them of his visible presence. Our Lord would seem to have had in mind the *strain* to which the disciples would be subjected immediately after the Ascension. In their bewilderment they would need clear guidance lest at the critical moment they should take the wrong turn. How very real a danger this was we see by the narration of the events that immediately followed our Lord's death. We get the situation vividly summed up in a few graphic words in the Gospel of St. John. "Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a-fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee." It was the instinctive return of discouraged men to a familiar way of life, in which, at any rate, they would feel the ground solid under their feet. It was a situation that was bound to arise, and which our Lord, foreseeing, provided against. His teaching about the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, who should come and abide with them forever; who should lead them into all the truth and should interpret to them his mind and make clear to them the meaning of his instruction and action, was intended to put them in an attitude of expectancy and set their faces toward the future as containing events which would explain much that was dark in his

teaching, and put their relation to him on a new and deeper basis. "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now," he said, pointing them to the future, when, because of their new relation to him their intercourse would be resumed under conditions that would make possible a fuller impartation of his mind in that they would then be in the possession of a new capacity of understanding. It was vital that they should at least grasp the fact that this new relation and this new capacity of understanding were conditioned upon his further action in sending to them the Spirit.

With this much in mind, we are in a position to understand that one of the effects of the coming of the Holy Ghost would be to restore to them the sense of our Lord's presence with them. His words, that it was expedient for them that he go away, would have been a very hard saying to them; but now they would find that the withdrawal of his visible presence was essential to his restoration to them in the power of his Risen Life. This restoration was effected by the vital action of the Holy Spirit in unifying the Risen Humanity of our Lord with those whom he had redeemed, so that they should become one Body, of which the Holy Spirit himself is henceforth the Life. It was through this action of the Spirit that they became conscious of Jesus, not as the cherished memory of a departed

friend and teacher, but in the conviction of an indwelling presence which was never separated from their souls. It was under the inspiration of this truth that they began to think and speak of themselves as "in Christ," and one with him and with each other.

When we attempt to reconstruct the experience through which the Apostles passed immediately after Pentecost, with a view to gain light on the methods of spiritual experience in general, thinking of their experience, as we must, as being in essentials the normal Christian experience, we try to understand what, in their action, would have been the mediating fact, bringing home to them the restored Presence of our Lord; that is, through what means did the Holy Spirit work in doing this? We are too much inclined to think of illumination of the mind as being all that was required—the dogmatic truth imparted by revelation and gradually appropriated in thought until its meaning became plain. But it would seem clear that that could not have been altogether the method. It is, to be sure, very much our own method of getting at truth; but the results of our use of the method hardly justify the procedure. We receive a truth that is taught us and turn it over in the mind until we say we understand it—and much of our ineffectiveness, as Christians is due to the fact that we stop at that point,

contented with the result. I do not think that the Apostles would have been any more effective than we are if they had stopped with intellectual appropriation of truth. The work of the Holy Spirit has only begun when he has led men so far. There must be a further appropriation and use of truth. And I think that we can see the process of mediation by which the revealed truth of their vital and corporate union with their Risen Master passed from the sphere of intellectual appropriation to that of personal experience in the case of the Apostles. They became sure that what they were taught was a fact when they experienced the indwelling presence of our Lord in their souls. And this passage from intellectual conviction to personal experience, I have no doubt, was mediated by the Holy Eucharist. If we are to understand the work of the Holy Spirit in the Body of the Incarnation, we must understand it, in large measure, as a sacramental work.

As we turn the pages of the book of the Acts of the Apostles with a view to understanding the Apostolic experience in the days immediately following Pentecost, we find that the Holy Eucharist occupied a central place in the religious life of the community from the very beginning. The popular impression that the place assigned by Catholics to the Holy Eucharist is a matter of late development is very wide of the facts. Among St. Luke's notes of

the unity of the Christian body is that they continued steadfast in the breaking of the bread, which sacrament was daily celebrated "in the house," that is, no doubt, in that upper room where they were accustomed to assemble. Their first Eucharist must have been an hour of wondrous experience. Through it they would have come into communion with their Risen Lord by the way that was henceforth to be their constant means of approach to him. Jesus was once more with them—that would be the fact of their daily experience. He who loved them and gave himself for them was still loving and giving himself. Day by day, as they knelt about whatever improvised "altar" they may have had, the fact of his restored Presence, now the very life of their souls, would have filled their hearts with joy and gladness. There would as yet be no "theology of the Real Presence," and there would be no need of it: the supreme fact of their daily experience would be, "Jesus is here." They would have been slower to realise that the presence with them of the Risen Jesus was a permanently constituted relation to be disturbed or broken only by the awful fact of sin; that they were permanently united to him because they had become members of his Body, participants in his divine and heavenly life—that they were one body with him, dwelling in him and he in them.

It was the constructive action of the Holy Spirit that built up, if one may so state it, this new and inner relation of Christ with the souls of his disciples, and which gave them the spiritual comprehension which led them to the gradual understanding of their own experience and enabled them to formulate it in their teaching as the central fact of the Christian life. It is one of the chief works of the Holy Spirit to guide Christians to the analysis and statement of experience, and this work is as needful to-day as it ever was. It is no doubt true that Christian experience has been analysed and stated in the teaching of the Church; that we do not now approach the facts of Christian living altogether unprepared, but rather, they present themselves to us as verifications of truth we have been taught. Yet it remains true that each man's experience is unique and that he needs the illumination of the Holy Spirit in his appreciation of it. Our Lord unites himself with the souls of all true believers, but the manifestation of his Presence is diverse; and it is easy for us to miss the significance of it if we are unheedful of the Spirit's voice. This is especially true when we have passed beyond that immature stage which is usually marked by emotional experiences, to settled Christian living, the reactions of which are to be found, not in the emotions, but in the will. We may then easily misjudge

ourselves and misread the phenomena of settled obedience as the evidence of luke-warmness. In such case we are tempted to resort to spiritual stimulants, and by "special devotions" whip the spiritual nerves to a momentary excitement, only to experience, after a short interval, a real relapse. But if we are praying much to the Blessed Spirit for guidance we shall be led to understand the insignificance of stirred emotions as evidence of a life pleasing to our Lord and united to him, and shall find our test of fidelity and acceptance in the obedient love that is evidenced by an unswerving devotion to his will. He is Christ's, not who has found religious services and actions emotionally exciting, but he "who has crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts."

As we try to understand the spiritual experience of the Apostles after Pentecost, as that experience was developed under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we note that their experience of union with the Risen Jesus had the effect of preventing their religion from fixing its attention too exclusively on the earthly life of our Lord. That, one cannot help feeling, was a real danger. It is a danger to which Christians have succumbed again and again. All those types of religion which have made the following of our Lord's example the supreme thing have yielded to this temptation. But the members of the

first communities escaped it because their relation to our Lord was not one of memory but of present experience. Their religion never had a backward, but always a forward, look. They expected the return of the Lord from heaven—that was no doubt an important element in producing a forward looking religion; but more important than that belief, and still operative when that belief grew dim in the lapse of years, was their sense of the continual presence of our Lord with them. Whether his coming in the clouds of heaven were soon or long delayed, the fact remained that he was with them now. What Christianity meant to them was not following Christ, or expecting Christ, but living in Christ. It was that that made them such wonderful servants of Christ as they went out to preach him and his kingdom. A religion whose centre is in the past, that looks back and tries to imitate; a religion whose centre is in the future, which looks forward and expects events; both alike lack dynamic. But a religion of which the centre is a present relation to the living Christ with whom it deals now, and to whose will it is responsive at every moment, is capable of sustained action on the world and the individual. It may be as “unworldly” as you like; but because its true work is response to the will of a present Lord its effects must be wrought in present time and on present society. It cannot neglect

these if it would. The impulses of the Holy Spirit compel it to action, drive it, not to the imitation of the Christ-life, but to its reproduction, with all its purifying and regenerative powers, in the world where it manifests itself. A world in which the Spirit of Christ is released into activity through its members is necessarily a world that is being reformed by the action of that Spirit. Just as the spiritual advance of the individual is conditioned upon his correspondence to the Spirit of Christ that dwells in him, so the spiritual improvement of the world is conditioned upon its response to the ideals of the spiritual society which is being revealed and built up within it.

I have dwelt thus, in this meditation, on the work of the Blessed Spirit as a constructive work effecting our incorporation into the Body of Christ and sustaining us in the union of that Body, because this is not the side of his work that is usually dwelt upon. Indeed, much that I have read on the work of the Holy Spirit has made upon me the impression of a separate activity on his part, as though he were taking up a work that our Lord had laid down. But as relates to the Body of Christ, the Christian Church, he is the Spirit of Christ, given because Christ is glorified, who takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us. There are not separate and successive actions of the Persons of the Blessed

Trinity, but a unity of will in related actions, in which, for purposes of clearness of thought, we emphasise one or another feature of the action, as the work of one or another Person of the Trinity. It is needful at times, to mark this fact, lest we have the appearance of forgetting the unity of God in our forms of stating the activities of the Persons in God. What we are thinking of now is still the work of the Incarnation, only stated under such modified conditions that the office of the Holy Spirit in the Body of Christ is emphasised.

With so much of warning, we may turn to this other point, that it is the office of the Holy Spirit to create in the members of the Body of Christ a spiritual mind and judgment. I am not speaking of inspiration, but of that inner harmony of thought and will between the believer and Christ which enables us to look at life and judge it with the practical certainty that our judgment is in accord with the mind of our Lord, and indeed, because of our indwelling in him, is his mind. I do not mean that our inner illumination is such as to enable us to dispense with, or to justify us in disregard of, the external teaching of the Body of Christ, or to set ourselves in opposition to our normal spiritual guides; but I mean that through the operation of the Holy Spirit upon our own spiritual nature, and especially upon our surrendered intellects and wills,

we grow instinctively to respond to his monitions, and so become habituated to think of life in terms of its spiritual values that our judgments upon life may be trusted to be in accord with truth. The liberty wherewith we have been made free is rooted and grounded in this: That our relations to Christ and his Spirit are so intimate that we are certain to be in accord with them in thought and action, or, if not, we shall at any rate be conscious of the discord. Practically, what I mean is this: That in those constant daily decisions that we perforce must make, whether intellectual upon truth, or moral upon conduct, if we are conscious of being faithful and loving members of our Lord, seeking, not self, but him and his glory, we may trust ourselves to decide rightly; we may properly rely on our enlightened judgment. It is only when we find that our minds are clouded and prejudiced by sin that we need hesitate. The Christian needs a certain self-reliance, which yet is not self-reliance, but reliance upon the fact that he is in Christ and Christ in him, and that his soul is the abode of the Spirit of truth and guidance. We need a certain robustness of faith that will counteract any tendency to morbidity. It is usually morbidity and scrupulosity, with symptoms of spiritual infirmity, which makes people substitute an exterior conscience for the conscience God has given them, and insist upon hav-

ing their mind and conscience made up for them rather than, in trust in the Presence that is within them, making them up for themselves. It is better for us to make mistakes in good faith, and after earnest thought and prayer, than to avoid mistakes, if we can so avoid them, by a method that leaves us spiritual parasites and weaklings. I recognise fully that there is such a thing as legitimate direction; that there are times when we need exterior help and guidance; that such help and guidance, too, is one of the instruments of the Holy Spirit. But what we need is *help and guidance*, not the substitution of another will and conscience for our own. For the most part what leads people to seek guidance is not ignorance, but a feeble will that shrinks from meeting duty, and a timorous faith that is afraid to trust itself to God. Sometimes, too, it is a foolish desire to talk about oneself, which is quite one of the lower forms of pride. We can solve most of our daily problems in our meditations and communions.

And to do so, I repeat, is not the way of self-sufficiency, but of steadfast faith. I do not believe that the Holy Spirit leaves any one without guidance who throws himself upon him in a spirit of faith and self-surrendered will. I think that we can all look back into our lives and see there times of crisis when important decisions had to be made. We

can see now the spirit in which we made them; we can see whether we took them to our Lord and asked his help and the guidance of the Holy Spirit; whether we made them the intention of our communions and fought them to a decision on our knees; or whether we made our decision in a purely worldly spirit and upon considerations of expediency. If the former was our course, I do not believe that we shall find any case in which we have since seen reason to regret our decision. We have again and again verified in our experience God's promise that we shall be taught of him. It may, no doubt, have been true, that when we made our decision we were not altogether clear in our own minds, and were only certain that we were acting for what seemed the best. But the future demonstrated the wisdom of our choice, and that it was the choice of a soul that sought God and was taught of him.

THE TWENTIETH MEDITATION

THE TWENTIETH MEDITATION

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

Let us listen to the words of St. Paul —

THE Church, which is his Body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

Let us picture —

A church in a city street when the congregation is coming together for worship. Those who are coming in here are widely separated from one another in the ordinary interests of their lives. Masters and servants, employers and employees, day-laborers and school children, women of the world and shop girls, they are divided from one another by ideals that never touch. That hard-faced man is the manager of a great business; what has he in common with that rough-handed old woman who

manages to exist from week to week by scrubbing floors? Is there any point of contact for either with that over-dressed girl who is full of the memories of last night's party, and is looking for some one with whom to talk them over? Stand here in imagination at the church door and read the faces of the passers: how they bear the marks of their course of life; how they mirror the characters of men and women. What different life-histories you can read there! And yet there is some force that is acting on each one of them, a force that makes their paths converge this morning at the church door. They pass in, one by one, for the most part without greeting, but once within the church they all seem to be fused into an unity, to be touched by the spirit of a common purpose. As the Eucharistic service goes on you lose the sense of individual worshippers in the sense of an united action, till, as their heads bow at the elevation, they are absolutely merged in the unity of the supreme act of worship, when with angels and arch-angels and all the company of heaven, they bow in adoration before the veiled presence of their God.

Consider, first —

That we accent too much the external differences that divide us one from another, permitting

ourselves to be the sport of appearances. But between the banker and the wash-woman the conditions of life that separate are of less importance and less strong than the ties that unite. There is something more than a conventional meaning in the phrase, "our common humanity"; and in any of the great crises of life the ties of this common humanity will show themselves stronger than the repulsions of class conventions. And there is a deep meaning, too, in our "common Christianity." Men and women who sit in the same church and join in the same worship and partake of the same sacraments, feel that there is between them a real and a deep relation. They are partakers of the same hope and respond to the same inspirations and share the same aspirations. That the members of the same congregation feel, or, as we say, realise, their relation to one another so feebly and passingly is because we all pay our chief attention to the surface of life. But you cannot understand the mystery and the life of the set by watching the play of the wind upon its surface from day to day; nor can you estimate human life by its surface occupations and interests. There is in all men and women a hidden life which is the real man or woman. It is in this secret life that the significance of the human being lies concealed. And it is by the realities of this hidden life that we touch one

another; it is there that we find an unity that is an effective bond constraining us to a oneness that is essential and abiding.

Consider, second —

That this unity is one that arises from the possession of a common life. The Incarnate Life of our Lord is the Life of his Body and of all its members. We are all one in Christ Jesus. It is no doubt to be desired that our unity should manifest itself in our social relations in a deepening sense of brotherhood. The brotherhood of them that believe should be a more obvious thing than is actually the case. But is it not true that we underestimate its power and extent? Our lives tend to go their own way, immersed in their own personal interests; they are filled with exacting details, subject to increasing demands upon their energies; but let there come a demand that is clear upon our brotherly relation to other members of the Body, and is it true that the common experience is failure? I do not think so. It is within our knowledge, is it not, that men acknowledge readily the ties of spiritual relationship, indeed, of common humanity? Let any one be in trouble, and kindness and sympathy are unfailing. Our chief failure is not in these qualities or in readiness to exercise them; but failure in attention, failure

to notice and estimate needs that are not pressed upon us. We respond to the calls of brotherhood, but we so often wait for the call to be vocal, and are unheedful of the silent call of opportunity. And it is true, too, that we fail in our grasp on the spiritual nature of our lives, fail in conscious estimate of them as regenerate lives, lives of which the spiritual activities should be characteristic and constant. We do not enough seek expression for the inner life, and the consequence is that that life remains too subterranean and inappreciable. An intense realisation of our incorporation into Christ and our vital union with him will energise all our spiritual activities.

Let us, then, pray —

That we may know ourselves as members of the Body of Christ; that we may see more clearly the obligations of that membership to our risen Head and to one another.

O Almighty God, who has built thy Church upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the head corner-stone; Grant us so to be joined together in unity of spirit by their doctrine, that we may be made an holy temple acceptable unto thee, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

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I believe in the Holy Catholic Church. That Church is the Body of Christ. That is at once the simplest and most comprehensive definition of it. It attaches it definitely to the Incarnation and stresses the fact that the Incarnation of our Lord was not a passing incident in the divine process of redemption, but a permanent mode of the divine action by which we are ever being rescued from sin and spiritual death.

The primary conception under which the Church is presented to us in the Gospels is that of the Kingdom: the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand is the preparatory announcement; and much of our Lord's teaching is taken up with indicating one or another aspect of the Kingdom's life and work. The impression that the teaching as a whole makes upon us is that there is impending a spiritual event which will manifest the power and the glory of God, and will vindicate his rule in the world by the destruction of the wicked and the establishment of the righteous in the Kingdom of the Messiah. If we decline to interpret our Lord's utterances by the light that subsequent events have thrown back upon them, and insist upon a literal understanding of the most emphatic of his sayings in regard to the nature and appearance of the Kingdom of Heaven, we should, no doubt, find that the slow establishment of the Church and its

age-long history, satisfy but inadequately the conceptions we have formed of the nature of the Kingdom and its coming. We should be driven to the conclusion that the Church, as we see it in history, is something quite other than the Kingdom of Heaven as it was conceived by our Lord and understood by his immediate followers. But I do not believe that that method of interpretation is a necessary, or a legitimate one, at least for a Christian, who is convinced on independent grounds of our Lord's divinity. We are entitled, I think, to interpret our Lord's utterances in regard to the Kingdom that it was his purpose to announce and to set up, in the light of the history of the kingdom itself. Prophecy is not inverted history; and it rarely happens that from the prophecies of an event we can determine what the exact nature of the event will be. The thing prophesied usually surprises us by being much greater in content than we should have inferred from the prophecy of it. This is true of the prophecies of the coming of our Lord himself. The expectations of a personal intervention of God in the history and life of Israel for its deliverance and redemption which were created in the minds of devout meditators upon the institutions of Israel and the writings of its prophets, fall very far short of the Incarnation of God for the redemption of the world. The Incarnation and Atonement went

far beyond any meaning that the prophets themselves could have attached to their utterances. And yet their meaning is included in the Incarnation; and the Incarnation is the only complete and adequate fulfilment of their prophecies. So it is in regard to the Gospel utterances in relation to the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom when it came was a much greater fact than we should have inferred from the prophecies and descriptions of it. Our Lord was compelled, it would seem, to present his thought of the Kingdom in such terms as were familiar to his hearers, with the risk of a certain amount of temporary misunderstanding, and to leave to the future a more adequate expression of the nature of the Kingdom, when experience of the life of the Kingdom had made comprehension of the nature of it possible. At the same time his parabolic teaching contains many a hint that was at the time disregarded, or indeed, misunderstood, but which we to-day can see contain the adequate corrective of a belief in an immediate manifestation of the Kingdom of God in a catastrophic Day of Judgment.

The element that was needed to enable the followers of our Lord to comprehend the nature of the Kingdom of God was lacking until the Ascension. Not until then could they understand the meaning of the Incarnation; not until then could

they understand that the Kingdom of Heaven was not essentially a rule of God over men, but a rule of God in and through men—not a rule exercised compulsively upon subjects, but an expression of God through children who had become united to him. When men could see, as St. Paul at once saw, that the essence of Christianity is the union of God and man through the mediation of the God-Man, Christ Jesus, then they could rapidly think their way through neglected phases of our Lord's teaching to the conception of the Kingdom of God as the Body of the Incarnation of which Christ is the Head and all Christians the members; then they could see the Church as "his Body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." It is inevitable that in constructing our body of belief, we do so by putting together those elements that we can understand out of the total mass of teaching to which we have access, neglecting those elements that are incomprehensible to us. Then, as we come to understand the meaning of these neglected truths, we take them into our system, effecting the necessary adjustments. It would be absurd if at any time we were to insist on wiping out all our knowledge and experience that were subsequent to a certain date, and insist upon producing a Creed on the basis of the earlier ascertained facts. Yet that is what we are asked to do when we are invited to

form a conception of the Kingdom of God on the basis of the understanding that our Lord's immediate hearers must have had of his words. Rather, we are entitled to the interpretation of his words that was arrived at by his followers through the experience that came to them as the result of his Resurrection and Ascension.

And that interpretation was that the Church is "his Body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." Our relation to that Body, it came to be understood, was effected through the sacrament of baptism. By that sacrament we are incorporated into Christ and reckoned among his members. The Body of Christ, therefore, presents itself to us as a growing Body. The Incarnation spreads and increases as ever more human beings are brought into the Body. Christ becomes, in a true sense, ever more and more Incarnate, as the Vine grows with ever-expanding life. We see, therefore, how the Church must be Catholic and One, and that this catholicity and unity have to do with the relation of the members with the Head, rather than with their relations with one another. Catholicity and unity are inherent aspects of the divine life, rather than external relations of members of the Body. The Church is not Catholic in the sense that it contains all men; it was Catholic from the very beginning in that it was capable of minister-

ing to the needs of all men, in that it was constituted to be the custodian of the entire revelation of God and of the grace needful for the sanctification of humanity. It taught and teaches the whole truth; it offers itself to all men as the medium of salvation. So its Unity is the Unity of a Body—the Unity of all members with the Head of the Body. All who have been baptised into Christ and abide in living union with him are his members.

The effectiveness both of the Catholicity and of the Unity of the Church are hindered by the external divisions of its members. Hence the pressing nature of the problem of Church Unity. “Our unhappy divisions” must be felt as grievous spiritual loss by all who at all realise the meaning of the problems involved. At the same time, however much we may lament our disastrous state, I am unable to see that we are making any progress toward the solution of our difficulties, or are likely to make any. I can only speak for myself, but to me it seems that present attempts at unity are bound to fail because they are proceeding on fundamentally wrong lines. They aim at the attainment of some sort of external uniformity,—and uniformity and unity are quite different things. Unity through obedience to the dicta of an external centre of unity, and unity through agreement on a platform containing a certain minimum of alleged

"essential doctrines," leaving a large margin of belief and practice to liberty of choice, alike are futile. The Unity of the Body of Christ is expressed neither by a governmental unity, in its essence purely secular and borrowed in conception from the "Kings of the Gentiles," nor by some sort of social compact, borrowed from democratic social ideals. It were well if we could drop all attempts to *recreate* a church unity on the analogy of secular models, and get to understand that the essential Unity of the Church exists, because it never has been destroyed, and set ourselves to the realisation of this essential unity in our lives. The Church of God was not one, and then, through human sin, split into many churches, leaving us with the problem of reconstituting them into a unity once more. The Church of God is, as it always has been, and as it cannot otherwise be, One, and our problem is the realising of that Unity in a living experience. Our Lord's prayer for his disciples was not that they might be united in uniform obedience to a visible Head, nor that they might agree upon a certain minimum of doctrine and practice, but that they may be one, "as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee." That is, the unity we are to look for and pray for and work for, is the unity that is an outcome of dwelling in God and God in us: it is the unity of those

who are "in Christ," realising that unity in their relations to one another. When we shall succeed in being one with God, that unity will of itself prevent us from being at enmity one with another.

The fundamental note of the Church is not Apostolicity or Catholicity or Unity, but Sanctity. When once we have learned this we shall have no difficulty in travelling the road to unity—but not till then. The history of the Church is a history of divisions caused by the unholiness of its members, members whose vocation is the vocation to sanctity. Made members of the Holy Body of Christ, and put in contact with the means for the attainment of personal holiness, they have failed to do this; and so failing have been the cause of the divisions of Christendom. And to-day, instead of realising the cause and meaning of our failure and setting ourselves humbly to the pursuit of holiness with the well-founded hope that unity will follow in good time, we concern ourselves with schemes for the attainment of unity which are predestined to failure from their very nature. The holiness of the Anglican Priesthood is an end much more to be desired and laboured for than the recognition of Anglican Orders by the Papal See; and a body of laity which shall display the marks of a true and deep communion with our Lord will be more influential in winning a recognition of the true

Catholicity of the Protestant Episcopal Church than a change of name. For the present the American Church needs to concentrate its attention upon its own spiritual state, and fit itself to be a leader to Unity before it offers itself to be one.

I believe in the Holy Catholic Church. That Church is the sphere of supernatural action. Because its members are members of the Body of Christ, the powers and graces of the Risen Christ are manifested through them. We are made members of Christ's Body in order that his Incarnate work may be carried on in and through us. The members of the Body are more than the representation of Christ, they are the expression of him—they are the medium through which Christ expresses himself to the world. What the world knows of Christ it learns from the members of his Body. Our real testimony to the truth of Christianity is not found in the force or facility with which we are able to defend Christian theory, but in the degree in which our lives are representative of Christ's life. Whether those supreme qualities which in him have proved so endlessly fascinating to men were just the unique adornment of One Man, or can be endlessly reproduced by all men through union with him—that is the testimony that the lives of Christians are expected to offer. It is as to that point that you and I are called to give evidence.

And what evidence have we to give? I fancy that there are many members of the Church who consider that conformity to the routine of the Christian life is a sufficient expression of their membership in the Christian Body. "I fast twice in the week, and give tithes of all that I possess," would seem to be an adequate expression of that point of view: only when we come to state it in those terms we become aware that it has suffered pointed criticism. The fact is that no routine is of much value, save for its steadying power. It may exist as an imitation or as a survival, without any trace of spiritual activity. If our lives are to be evidential lives it must be because they are able to change the points of a routine into actions of a high spiritual potency. I may go through the day's routine of prayer and have utterly failed to find prayer a spiritually effective act. But if prayer is a true expression of spiritual desire and aspiration, still more, if it is the medium of spiritual vision, I shall lose my sense of routine even while observing it. All spiritual activities which are so performed as to be releases of spiritual power, exercise a transforming power in our lives. They effect changes that soon make themselves manifest in character. First of all we experience the change ourselves. There comes a morning when we know that our communion has been a real experience of our Lord's

presence. There comes a day when we are able to carry the meaning of our meditation with a good deal of success into the details of our life. And we find that such experiences as these, which make themselves evident to us, as spiritual and inner experiences, are making themselves felt in a greater power of control and direction in the exterior life. Their fruits grow and ripen, and so make themselves evident to all who know us. We are losing interest in a good many things which before seemed important. The tone of our conversation changes; we find that much that we were accustomed to say was profitless and had better be left unsaid. We find that the estimate of the importance of the things that we *have* to do alters, and that we now have time for the things that we declined to do because we were so busy.

The result of this gradual movement of the life is that we begin to *experience* where we had only *believed*: we begin to find what it means to be a member of Christ. We thought that we knew that before, but it turns out that we did not; and we have passed into a new world of spiritual experience in finding it. We had read about this world, and people had tried to tell us about it and we thought that we understood, but now it is plain that we did not. There are things that we can only understand through experience of them.

Great fundamental notions, love, honour, glory, beauty, no one can explain to us—we know them or we do not; that is, we have experienced them or we have not. It is so with the teaching of our Lord as to life; those wonderful qualities of the Sermon on the Mount are completely unintelligible till they have become ours. Men worry themselves in explanation—and explain nothing; and then the day comes when we acquire an experience and we know; we know what it is to become humble and pure and peaceable and self-sacrificing; and the world is changed, changed because we are looking at it through opened eyes. What strange alterations there are in its values, how much more beautiful it seems! Spiritual people lose the world? No; they are the only people who can effectively use it.

And this change in us which is fundamentally the realisation of the life of Christ in us, the possession of the Word of Christ, and the power to estimate the world and life in terms of his teaching, makes itself evident to those about us. They may regard us with indifference, they may regard us with awe, they may regard us with disgust, but in any case they recognise the difference. That is so much gain; for the difference between the world and the Church, between the Christian and the non-Christian, is essential, and if it exists, must be recognised.

May we not say that the power with which the Church, and therefore we, the members of the Church, bear witness to its supernatural character as the Body of Christ, is proportioned to manifested ability to do without the world, ability to live by supernatural motives and to devote itself to supernatural ends? Is it not here that its descent into the field of competition with purely human organisations, where it necessarily adopts business methods, and values efficiency and success before all else, implies forgetfulness of its own essential nature? There is only one success possible to the Church, success in manifesting Christ: there is only one form of effectiveness open to it, effectiveness in the production of sanctity. And in these things it has no competitors. It goes by a lonely road, neglected, if not scorned, by all worldly men. Men praise the Church and congratulate it on keeping up with the times when it shows signs of abandoning its supreme vocation, that it may become a philanthropic and benevolent society. But in such cases it witnesses to what? To the existence among men of a certain desire to improve the world which it sets itself to foster and develop, but which it has rendered itself as powerless to effect as any of the myriad benevolent societies of which the centuries have seen the birth and death. It has, perhaps, emphasised itself as sympathetic, but in doing so it

has eliminated from its action the very factor that lends sympathy power. It is sympathetic with the well-meaning but helpless sympathy of those Apostles who, at the mountain foot, tried to cast the devil from the idiot child; but it is only when the Church, mindful of its supernatural character, has passed through the discipline of prayer and fasting, and comes from the Mount where it has had converse with the Father, that it can cast out any devils at all.

And this is not to forget that the Church contains men in all stages of spiritual development and is concerned with the betterment of their lives in the place where they now are. It is not to forget that the Church is, by one side of it, the *brotherhood* of them that believe. It is not to forget that the mutual offices implied in the notion of brotherhood include kindness and helpfulness and charity. Rather, it is to assert that, just because these qualities are indispensable elements in its ideal, it must insist that, in its understanding of them, they can only be attained by men who conceive of life as fundamentally spiritual. The Church occupies itself with ministries for the improvement of human society as a part of its general mission of making men divine. It is no ambition of the Church to make men more comfortable, save as their comfort results from their spiritual improvement or minis-

ters to it. It is anxious about poverty, not because poverty makes men uncomfortable, but because poverty implies the enslavement of man to man, and puts those who are poor in conditions of degradation which render it almost impossible that spiritual ideals of life should have sway, or even be intelligible. It objects to the present organisation of society because it is unbrotherly, producing separation and enmity where there should be love and joy and peace. The Church declines to stop, where the humanitarian ideal stops, with the ideal of justice; it holds to a broader ideal, the ideal of holiness, the manifestation of the life of Christ in the life of his members.

No greater calamity can befall us, as Church or as individuals, than to lose sight of this ideal—holiness. Our woes have their root in this, that we have so largely lost sight of it. It may seem more practical to approach the problems of a divided Christendom, or a corrupt society, or of an ill-working industrial order, from some other point of view; but it is not. The most practical thing for a human being is to subject his will to God's will, and to live his life in accord with that will. "In his will is our peace," in whatever sense you may understand peace, religious, social, industrial; and there is no peace elsewhere, or otherwise founded. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

THE TWENTY-FIRST MEDITATION

THE
TWENTY-FIRST MEDITATION
THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

Let us listen to the Word of God —

I SAW under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

Let us picture to ourselves—

These souls, waiting for the fulfilment of God's promises to them. We seem to hear them crying out of their weariness and distress for the coming of deliverance. They had suffered much in their lives on the earth because of their fidelity to God. In the cities where they had dwelt they had seen men living lives of riotous pleasure, and they had restrained themselves because of the ideal of life they had received from their Master. They had seen other members of the Christian community falling back to the world, unable any longer to endure the sacrifices that were the part of those who bore the cross. But they had held on to the end—"for the name of God, and for the testimony." And now that they have passed beyond the suffering of earth, they find that their full joy is withheld, awaiting the perfecting of their brethren. What pathos there is in that long cry that comes forth from the altar and fills the courts of heaven! "How long, O Lord, holy and true?" We seem, as we listen, to hear it rise and swell, and then die into silence. It is not the voice of complaint, but the voice of longing; they are so near the fulfilment of what they had lived and died to attain! But the message to them is that they have not lived or died for themselves, but they lived and died in and for the Body of which they are members; their lives

are still wrapped up in the life of the Body, and their full joy must await the perfecting, not of themselves, but of the Body.

Consider, first —

The far-reaching meaning of those words of St. Paul: "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." Just because the Church is the Body of Christ, and we members one of another, our life at any moment is conditioned by the lives of others. It is not possible to consider our own desires, our own needs, our own rewards, in isolation. They have to be considered in their relation to the life of the Body. We cannot rightly be interested in our own spiritual growth, as a thing apart; if it is a healthy growth it is the growth of a member of the Body, affecting the life of the whole. That is the lesson taught these waiting souls—that they are not, because of their fidelity unto death, detached from the life and obligation of the Body of Christ; they still have their part in it, they are still members of it, their state is still conditioned by the state of their fellow-servants that are suffering on the earth. It is well for us to ponder the meaning of this truth, that earth and heaven, this world and the next, are not isolated states of being, but that they are knit together in the unity of the Body of Christ. Whatever the

state of being in which any member of that Body may live, he is still in a vital relation to the whole Body and to every member of it; the law still holds, that if one member suffer, the other members suffer with it; and if one rejoice, the others rejoice with it. There is no such separation between heaven and earth as we are wont to imagine; rather there is the closest interdependence. We have so much difficulty in making anything practical out of the truth of the Communion of Saints because we forget our interdependence and insist in looking at our own lives as separate entities, related to God, no doubt, but only in some fictitious or imaginative way, related to the whole life of the Church. A study of those glimpses that we are suffered to have of the "other world" shows that that world is ever eagerly interested and deeply concerned in the affairs of our "world"; that its powers are ever exerted in sympathetic helpfulness toward us.

Consider, second —

That because the Church as a whole, and not the heavenly part of it, is the Communion of Saints, its total success in responding to the will of its Head, and manifesting his life, is conditioned upon our success in response and manifestation. The Church moves forward as a whole; the lagging advance of one member delays the advance of the

whole Body. The impetuous onrush of the saints is balanced and, in measure, nullified, by the lingering advance of the bulk of the membership of the Church. We need to examine ourselves as to this fact:—How far is the advance of the Church being hindered by me? Am I an enthusiastic member of the Body, helping by my zeal and self-sacrificing efforts, by the consecration in unselfish service of all my powers, the completion of the ideal of the Kingdom of God? Or are there souls under the altar to-day crying out, “How long, O Lord, holy and true?” only to receive the answer, “You must wait, as I must wait, till such and such souls are disciplined to take their full part in the work of my kingdom.” It seems a small thing, the thing that we individually are given to do, but it is a part of a great whole, and the whole is not complete till each part is completed. No man can tell the precise value of his contribution to the work of God’s Kingdom, no man can say how valuable he is in the communion of saints; but he has no right to assume that he is valueless and the work will go on as well without as with his contribution. Is it not true that there are souls depending in some measure on all of us, depending on our example and word for the perfecting of some quality in which they are lacking—being, perhaps, without perception of that quality, because it was our vocation in

life to show it, and we have failed? A certain part of a machine may be very small, but it may also be very vital; and the work assigned to any individual in the Kingdom of God is not to be estimated in terms of human values. We are to assume that our place in the kingdom is of vast importance, and fill it with a sense of immense responsibility to God and to our fellows.

Let us, then, pray —

For a fuller understanding of the meaning of the Communion of Saints; for a deeper appreciation of our place in that communion and of our responsibilities to it. Let us understand that we must be numbered with the saints now, if we will be numbered with them in glory everlasting.

O Almighty God, who hast knit together thine elect in one communion and fellowship, in the mystical body of thy Son Christ our Lord; Grant us grace so to follow thy blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those unspeakable joys which thou hast prepared for those who unfeignedly love thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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The Communion of Saints! Our thought goes out instinctively to the "other world" where "saints are clothed in spotless white, and evening shadows

never fall"; we think of the "saints in light" entranced by the splendour of the Beatific Vision; we think of the future of the Christian as a life that moves onward to the time when it shall enter this communion and have its perfect consummation and bliss in God's eternal and everlasting glory. Into this Communion of Saints we shall enter some time if God will.

It is, no doubt, needless to say that this is a very partial way of looking at the Communion of Saints. The Communion of Saints is not a future fact, nor does it belong to a future world. It is one of those springing and growing facts that have their origin here, and reveal their meaning here, but attain their full development elsewhere. The Communion of Saints is only another way of looking at the Holy Catholic Church. The content of the two is the same; because we belong to the Holy Catholic Church we are of the Communion of Saints. It is simply that when we are thinking of the Communion of Saints we are thinking of the members of the Body of Christ, less as they are related to him, their Head, than as, through their indwelling in him, they are related to one another and are active toward one another. It is the internal activities of the Body of Christ, if one may venture the expression, that we have in mind when we think of the Communion of Saints. It is an intensely practical

doctrine that we have to do with. It seems to me that our religion would acquire much of light and joy if it stressed more the truths that are embodied in this article of the Creed. Let us see if we can draw out some of them.

If we think of the Church merely as an institution in the world, an institution with a long history, widespread and of many activities, we understand that its fortunes are the outcome of the manifold activities of multitudes of whom we have no knowledge. There is an heritage brought down from the past which contains not only the results of the actions of men long dead, but also contains their *spirit*. Our charitable works to-day are not simply the successors of the works of the past, copies of them in terms of modern architecture and sanitation, but they have a certain spirit in dealing with their problems, which is the spirit of Christ, ultimately no doubt, but which also is fragrant with the memory of the great saints who have given themselves to the like work. There lingers something of the Christ-like touch of St. Francis, the touch that eased the pains of lepers as it so lovingly washed their sores, in our ministry in hospitals; there is something of the mind of St. Vincent in our dealing with orphans; there is the wide charity of Howard in our work for prisoners. And when we turn our minds from history and consider that St. Fran-

cis and St. Vincent and Howard still live and are still members of the Kingdom of God, we are sure, are we not, that their interest still lives in the works that meant so much to them while they were on earth? We cannot imagine that they have less interest now than they had then; we cannot imagine them so fascinated with the joys of heaven as to have lost interest in earth. In that case, we should think of heaven with dread, rather than with joy and hope. If heaven means *an utter break of relations*, then those who regard it with indifference are justified.

We can carry the same line of thought into any institution, any parish, any family. The building and the shaping and the training were effected by the embodiment in them of something of the men and women who were concerned with them. Their mind, their spirit, their love, went into them: and they remain. The founders and trainers are still *attached* to what they laboured for and loved. Again, it is impossible to think of death as involving *detachment*; for what was attached was spirit not body—the essential human being, not some separable accident of him.

As we carry this line of thought out to the life of the Church we feel that it is strengthened by the very nature of the Church. For the member of the Church has not the loose relation to it that the

founder has to an institution, but his relation is organic. He is a member of the Body and remains a member of it wherever he may be. His life and action, therefore, affect the life and action of all other members because they affect the Body of which both are parts. His influence on the fortunes of the Church is not the passive persistence of an ideal to which he devoted himself and which he still loves; it is the active influence of one who is still energetic in the life of the Body. You may transfer a man from one department of the government to another, and in doing so you change the point of application of his energy; but you do not change the fact that he is still energetic, still influential in the fortunes of his country. You may remove the Christian from this life, and from the special set of problems he was here dealing with; but you do not remove him from the Kingdom of God, and you do not lessen, rather you heighten, his spiritual effectiveness in the kingdom. We believe that the saint in heaven is a more effective member of the Body of Christ than he was on earth; and we do not believe that his effectiveness is effectiveness for heaven only, but that he is effective for earth also. If this be not so, I do not see that the Communion of Saints, as between the saints on earth and those in heaven, has much of meaning or importance to us here and now.

No doubt we find a certain difficulty in stating for ourselves just how this continual influence of the saint is exerted; but I do not know that the difficulty is enhanced if we think of him as acting in another part of the Body above what it is if we think of him as acting under our eyes. What is the influence of sanctity in any case? It is superficial to say that it is the influence of an example, because it is what is back of the example that we are trying to get at. It is the influence of a personality: and the best conception of a personality that I am able to form is that it is a centre and source of power. We know what we mean when we speak of a powerful personality; we know that we do not mean certain things said and done, but that back of the things said and done there is a certain something which is original with the man and gives his sayings and doings potency, carrying-power, drive. Another man may do and say the same things and the result is absolutely different. It is only those who suppose that we are turned into some sort of harp-playing nonentities in heaven who can suppose that the power of spiritual personality will be lost to the Kingdom of God when a man dies. Rather, one would suppose it raised to a higher potency; that it would become more effective and on a broader scale. "Yes: but more effective in heaven," you say. No: more effective in the Kingdom of

God, in the Body of Christ; and more effective in relation to the saints' interests. And why think of the saints' interests as utterly changed? Why not assume that among other and different interests, the old interests will abide?

One, perhaps the chief, mode of the saint's activity while he was on earth was prayer. Then we valued his prayers; we asked that our names might be included among his intercessions. If we had any need, any work to do, any spiritual battle to fight, we went to him; we asked him to take our need with him when he went into his secret place to be with God; if he were a priest, we asked him to bear it upon his heart when he went into the holy place to make intercession for the people. We relied upon those prayers; we found that again and again God answered them. If we knew him intimately we knew how much he himself relied on prayer. We saw the tension of his face as he went to the altar; we saw his joy as he came away from the meeting with his Master. We knew that he never undertook anything, even things of slight importance, the talking with a child, the call he had to make, the letter he had to write, without the momentary retirement of his soul to be alone with God. Perhaps as he talked with us we could see the running commentary of prayer that accompanied the conversation. Well, now he lives in the

nearer presence of God, he enjoys a closer communion with his Saviour: are we to assume either that he has lost interest in us, or that his prayers are of less avail? Shall we not rather hold to this thought, that he still bears our needs and our names into the Inner Presence, where the prayers of the righteous avail much?

We on our side, if we have ever valued intercourse and close personal relations with those who are eminent in spiritual character, shall still value it. We shall not easily consent that such men and women of powerful spirituality as we have known shall become mere memories. To recall such with regretful tears seems to me to show small belief in the Kingdom of God as a unity in which we participate. We shall rather delight to commune in prayer with those whose prayers we have felt it our privilege to share. I do not know any reason why I should not ask the prayers of any friend here; and I do not know of any reason why I should cease to do so when the friend is removed elsewhere in the Kingdom of God. I, who am constantly asking the prayers of sinners here on earth, do not see why I should hesitate to ask the prayers of the saints of God. Nor do I hesitate.

I believe in the Communion of Saints. I think that I have sufficiently discussed elsewhere the nature of holiness to justify me in passing over that

phase of the subject now. But I may perhaps emphasise once more the fact that this Communion that we believe in is shared in by all who are in a state of grace, and that the privileges that accrue to us from it imply corresponding obligations. In order to take our place properly in any organization, still more rightly to perform our function in an organism such as the Body of Christ, there is need on our part of a certain preparation, and that preparation here takes the form of a certain discipline of the spiritual nature. The saint is not a person of good intentions or of good habits, but is a special creation of divine grace. In germ, in potentiality, he is simply the baptised person; in actuality, he is a person who has passed through rigorous training, the resultant of many spiritual experiences. Many graces have been granted him and he has responded by many actions of the will. The saint, I should say, is a strictly artificial product—the work of the divine artist; but, like all work of the highest artistry, bearing the marks of individuality in execution. He is the work of the artist, yet a work wrought in material that is responsive after its own nature. The Divine Gardener makes each tree in his garden to bring forth fruit, but it is fruit after its own kind.

I stood on a June afternoon in a place of wondrous beauty—a rose garden. It lay upon a hill-

side, and, westward, one looked out over a valley to the tree-clothed hills beyond, already darkening as the sun went down. Down in the ravine at my feet a brook purled, filling the air with music. On the other sides the garden was enclosed with trellises covered with pink and white roses—masses of gorgeous bloom. At the foot of the trellises long lines of white lillies tossed a pungent perfume in the air. In narrow bed after narrow bed rows of splendid roses lifted their heads to the sun—delicate buds of saffron, huge balls of pink and white and crimson. Upon them had been spent all the skill of the experimenter, all the care of the gardener, all the resources of the millionaire. In a sense, these flowers were as artificial as the flowers that one sees in milliners' windows—they were works of art, the creations of the skill of man. But they were not creations out of nothing; they were modifications of the original rose. And thus in the garden of the Church of God the saints stand resplendent, rank upon rank; and they are the consummate products of God's grace; but also they are the modifications of our poor nature, and full of the promise of what we may become.

Because there is a Communion of Saints there is a co-operation of saints. The communion is not so much an achieved fact as a fact that is approaching fulfilment. Every member of the communion is

making individual contributions to the final result. The House eternal in the heavens, the City that hath foundations, is rising slowly but surely through the ages as the living stones are built in without the sound of axes and hammers, each one falling into the place designed for it by the Divine Architect. But it slips into and occupies its place so nicely, because somewhere there has been the work of the axe and the hammer of the skilled workman. When the temple rose silently on Mount Sion, it could rise silently because the noisy work had been done elsewhere. Far off in the forest of the Lebanon there had been the ring of axes and the crash of falling cedars as the workmen of Hiram prepared the beams and the pillars for the house. By the clay beds of the Jordan valley there had been the sound of many workmen as the moulds were made and the brazen instruments were cast. Far down under the city the masons hewed and smoothed the rough stones that built the foundations of the dwelling-place of God. In many an house in Israel the women sang as they spun the blue and purple and fine linen for the curtains of the temple of their God. It was only the last stage that had the silence of perfect work. So it is in our spiritual building; there is much hard and weary labour of the workers; many a habit to be hewn smooth, many a rough surface of natural

imperfection to be polished, many a temper to be melted in the fires of affliction and recast to be an ornament for the house. The rough places have to be made plain and the valleys filled before the King can come along the highway. We faint and grow weary sometimes at the obstinacy of the material that has to be dealt with. We despair at moments at the weakness of the flesh and the uncertainty of the will. But take courage and remember that we are engaged on no ephemeral work, but that the character that we are fashioning is to take its place among the saints in the kingdom of the future, there to abide eternally in the glory of his presence, there to experience eternally the passion of his love.

We need to bear in mind that the member of the Communion does not exist for himself but for God, the Kingdom, his fellows. The sanctity that he acquires through union with his Risen Head is a dynamic that expends itself in the interests of the Body. Sanctity is an impulsive force. Even in the extreme example of the hermit saints, who find few admirers to-day, it can hardly be contended that the reproach of fruitlessness is well aimed at them. Apart from the power of a life of prayer, a power that any Christian must take into account in an attempt to give any complete analysis of them, they were by their very protest against the world and their demonstrated power to dispense with it, cen-

tres of influence on behalf of a spiritual interpretation of life. We may not need that particular form of protest at present, but that we need the protest in no form cannot be maintained. It is a necessary function of the saint to present that protest in some incontrovertible form; to bring home to the world, not only the beauty of holiness, but its strength and sanity under present conditions. There is no lesson that the young men and women of New York need more to have brought home to them than the possibility of living simply and cleanly in the midst of the horrible corruption of which they are the daily spectators. The spectacle of the corrupting power of the desire for money, of the morally destructive power of the lust for pleasure, dulls the moral and spiritual sense of those who are in constant contact with it. Insensibly they are drawn to ideals that are spiritually deadening. Almost without noticing the changes that are taking place in them, they range themselves on the side of evil. And yet there are multitudes that have not gone so far as to be without perception of the beauty of holiness. What they need to hold and rescue them is the evidence of this beauty in the lives of men and women whom they know; to see those whose place in life opens to them all doors of self-indulgence, yet live as though those doors did not exist: who live quiet lives of great devotion, expending

the full powers of their manhood and womanhood in prayer and work for the Kingdom of God. Lives of great restraint, directed by the mind of the Spirit, denying themselves in the interests of ideal ends, are lives of great evidential power. They are lives that encourage and strengthen those who are beginning to say, Who will show us any good? There are very few human beings who have the inborn power to stand alone. We most of us feel the pull of the kind of life that surrounds us. We feel that the influences of the Powers of the Kingdom of Darkness dog our steps. But also, thank God, we are open to better influences, and we should willingly be led to respond to the influence of the Holy Spirit, if that influence were less a theory preached from pulpits, and more obviously an influence dominant in the lives of men and women whom we have been taught to look upon as Christian. Hence the tremendous responsibility of those who have recognised the call to be saints, to be so evidentially, showing to the world lives in which the power is the power of the Living Christ. The "hidden saint" has his virtue and his value, but there is always the need of the saint whose light shines plainly and unmistakably before men, guiding them to the Father.

One of the fruits of the Spirit, and therefore one of the attributes of sanctity, is joy. In the Com-

munion of Saints there is already a participation in the joy of the Lord. That joy is the joy of achievement, in being admitted to share in the victorious work of the Lord. There is deep and vivid joy in the accomplishment of any great work. What more joyous than to feel ourselves swept into the full tide of some great undertaking, to feel that we have a part, no matter how small, in the successful accomplishment of something that we say to ourselves is worth while? And what more worth while than the work of God's kingdom in which we are associated with the angels and saints and God himself? There are tasks that seem mere drudgery, but we forget their insignificance and commonplaceness when we can see that they do not end in themselves, but are items in a great whole with which, through them, we have become associated. Most work is tiresome and savourless unless we can manage in some way to lift it above itself. Most women shrink from the thought of a Sister's work, and question whether it is not found to be narrow and unhappy, with its endless round of offices said, and visits made and received, its isolation from all that is "entertaining." And no doubt it would be found deadening to all strength and all spring of life if it began and ended in itself—if it were a "work" and not a "vocation." But it neither begins nor ends in itself; it is an

element in a great whole—the work of the Kingdom of God. It gets its own peculiar joys from association with the saints and the saints' Master, who found that the supreme joy that life brought them was to lay down their life for the brethren. Do you imagine that those who from tenements and palaces, from crowded boarding-houses and luxurious apartments, sweep out in the early evening through Times Square, seeking to lose themselves for a few hours in excitement, guilty or other, know any joy so vivid, so keen, so worth while, as those who with rigorous self-discipline offer themselves and all their powers and possessions to the service of their brothers in the Catholic Church, which is the Communion of Saints? No: you do not believe that. You know that the joy of a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things he can make his own, but in the fulness of his self-offering to his Master and brothers. You know that. *Have you the spiritual strength to act upon it?*

"Ye are come," writes the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "unto Mount Sion, and unto the City of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the General Assembly and Church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus." In our moments of loneliness and

discontent, those moments that come at times to us all to kill the joy and vigour of our activity, how heartening are these words. With what renewed vigour we take up the burden that has now lost its weight; how gladly we press forward. For we go under watchful eyes. Angels—they are watching, and not unsympathetically. Saints—they are stooping to see how their successors run the race, praying that our strength may not fail. Jesus—he too is at hand with the cheer of his presence. No: we cannot fail. We can mount up on wings as eagles, we can run and not be weary, we can walk and faint not.

THE TWENTY-SECOND MEDITATION

THE
TWENTY-SECOND MEDITATION
THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS

Let us listen to the words of Nathan —

AND Nathan said unto David, Thou art the
Man.

Let us picture —

This scene in the royal palace where the prophet is standing before the king telling his story of the poor man's lamb. We can imagine something of the courage that was the prophet's as he went in to the king with his message of condemnation; he was taking his life in his hands that morning when God sent him to unveil the eyes of David that he might

see himself. We seem to see the intense eyes of the prophet fixed on David as the story goes on unfolding, waiting for some sign of comprehension of the inner meaning of the tale to show itself in the king's face. But what he sees there is just interest in the story—interest passing into anger as the tale goes on, till the wrath of the king boils over and he condemns most sternly the heartless rich man. We see David rising from his couch, righteously indignant, feeling the responsibility of his kingship to see that wrong is righted, and iniquity punished. One fancies Nathan rather perplexed that his thinly disguised allegory is not comprehended, and that in the end he has to speak plainly. But he does not hesitate: the words fall with crushing force—"Thou art the man." We see the face of the king blanch, and his whole form shrivel up, as the prophet goes on in words that fall like the sentence of death itself, slowly rehearsing the items of the indictment, till they culminate in the unfolding of the boundless extent of the divine mercy and goodness:—"and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things." That is what touches the quick of the conscience when a man comes to himself—the endless goodness of God, the gifts that he is ready to shake into our laps without stinting, and which we sacrificed and scorned from some passing self-gratifica-

tion. What must have been the depths of the self-loathing of David as the horror of his case swept over him. I am indeed this man, this man whom I have judged too vile to be suffered longer on the earth.

Consider, first —

That David was not a thoroughly corrupt man—he was a good man gone wrong through the sweep of a momentary passion. One fancies that to his contemporaries his action would have seemed about what might be expected in a king. We are judging him by the standard that Nathan brought to bear on him—the standard that was involved in his relation to God. Because of God's gifts, because of his knowledge that he had been chosen to be king over Israel, to represent to Israel the mind and purpose of God, he was bound to live by the light of God's revelation. That he knew that appears from his failure to plead any excuse, to make any defence. What excuses he had been making to himself we do not know; but whatever they may have been they do not survive the prophet's display of the nature of his act. His conscience responds to the indictment of Nathan instantly—"I have sinned against the Lord." It is the value of a religious training that under all the wayward experiences of sin the educated conscience survives. Deceive and harden

ourselves as we will, there is the uneasy sense that we are guilty, and there will come the day when some prophet's word will reach us, and we shall see ourselves clearly. It may be, certainly, that when that day comes we are too wedded to our sin to detach ourselves from it, too weakened in will to even wish for freedom; but see we shall, even if in the act of seeing we choose sin once more. But in David the conscience was not hardened, and to see himself was to abhor himself. All the evil past rose up before him, recounting itself step by step from that moment when the sight of his eyes kindled the lust of his flesh, through self-indulgence to the terror of threatened discovery, on to black treachery and murder. He had not intended that in the beginning, but one sin had forced him on to another sin, and now, in his moment of self-detection he sees the corpse of Uriah lying bloody before his eyes. And yet it is not the wronged Uriah that is at the bottom of his anguish, but the wronged God. It is not regret that he feels, but repentance—I have sinned against the Lord.

Consider, second —

That all true repentance must bring us face to face with that fact—I have sinned against the Lord. Under all other relations is our relation to our Father in heaven; back of all other responsibilities

is our responsibility to his will. Apart from recognition of that, we may have regret, remorse, even the determination to reform, but we cannot have repentance. That is based on the love of God and is a manifestation of a desire to put ourselves right with that love. Other relations may have to be restored in the course of our repentance, other wrongs may have to be righted, and ill-deeds made good as far as is in our power ; but the dealing of the soul with God is the primary thing, because the essence of sin is that it is rebellion from the will of God and a wound to his love. The soul lies stricken and desolate when it has cast itself out from the divine presence ; it is a fugitive and a wanderer in the earth until that presence is restored. Forgiveness is not the rectification of wrong done, because the essential wrong that we have done cannot be rectified by ourselves. We can only plead with God that we be restored to his favour, that the grace of pardon be shed abroad in us abundantly. Consider, whether you approach your own sins from this point of view. Is that which instinctively occurs to you, I have sinned against the Lord? Or do you try to estimate the evil of sin by the current standards of judgment that prevail among your neighbours, counting it less or greater as it is excused or condemned in the circle in which you move? Many men deliberately turn away from God's standard

and substitute for it the standard of worldly society. Nowhere is the influence of the world more disastrous than in the power that it exercises over moral standards. If only we can sin in respectable company, the sting of sin seems to be withdrawn. But it made no difference in the guilt of David's sin that all other kings commonly practised it; and David knew that it made no difference—that reveals the inner soundness of his character. He knew that he had sinned against the Lord.

Let us, then, pray —

For deeper appreciation of the essential nature of sin; let us pray that we may ever try to see our conduct through the eyes of God; pray to be delivered from spiritual blindness, and brought to true repentance.

Grant, we beseech thee, merciful Lord, to thy faithful people pardon and peace; that they may be cleansed from all their sins, and serve thee with a quiet mind; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

.

One of the things that until these last days humanity has been surest of is its sinfulness. It embodied this conviction in its religious systems, often absurd, often abhorrent in form, but the more absurd or abhorrent the form, the clearer the testimony to the conviction of sin. What we call nat-

ural religions are valuable in this regard, that they embody the spontaneous working of man's thought on the problems of life and destiny with which he feels himself confronted. They tell us, not only of this sense of sin, but also of man's despair to escape from sin otherwise than by an act of the unseen power that he had offended. Man knows that he has sinned, he knows that he needs forgiveness, he knows that he cannot forgive himself. That is what drives man to all the varied and often terrible attempts at propitiation which he has embodied in his religions.

We are as certain of our sinfulness as the men who embodied their instincts in the natural religions, and therefore there is no better news in all the good news proclaimed by our Lord than that which is summed up in this article of the Creed, I believe in the forgiveness of sins. That judgment upon our own conduct that we call conscience is justified, and more than justified, by the definition of man's state and destiny that is found in the pages of Revelation. The notion of sin is cleared from its obscurity, but so cleared it is only the more fearful. The nature of the offence against God that is involved in sin and makes it sinful, is cleared, too, but only that it may appear worse than we thought. What drives deepest into our souls and fills them with self-abhorrence, is not that we have

discovered what we had expected, that our conduct had aroused the anger of God, but that we have discovered what we did not at all expect, that we have wounded the love of God. When revelation draws aside the veil, what we behold is not an incensed Deity rising in wrath from his throne to take vengeance upon us, but a God with a broken heart hanging upon a cross where we have nailed him. The words that we hear when our ears are opened to the voice of God are not reproaches and cries for vengeance; but the words of one who pursues that he may rescue. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, to the end that all that believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

That is, the attitude of God that is made known to men by revelation, came to them as a surprise. They had not made any mistake about sin; or, if they had, it was in the way of an underestimate of it; but they made a mistake about God. They had thought him even such an one as themselves; they had conceived him, that is, in terms of their own nature. They knew how natural to them was anger against the sinner and the seeking vengeance for the wrong done, and they had attributed these feelings in a magnified form to God. Whereas it turned out that these feelings by which they had judged, and

which they had thought their best, were themselves sinful, the outcome of a depraved nature ; and that they had not only misunderstood God, but themselves. That, indeed, they could not get rightly to understand themselves until they knew something of God ; for to know man is to know him as he is in the divine ideal, as he shall be when he is restored and forgiven and endowed with the beauty of the indwelling life of God.

It needs, then, all that earlier part of the Creed, the teaching about God and the work of God Incarnate, and the mission and work of the Holy Ghost, to prepare us to understand sin. This article of the Creed does not come in here by accident or as an afterthought, but it comes in where alone it can be understood, after those clauses which prepare us to see its meaning and possibility. We see sin now, not as the mechanical violation of a law or fixed rule dependent upon the arbitrary will of the law-giver, but we see it as the rebellion of the child who rejects the wise love of the Father. We see that its evil lies deeper than opposition to external decrees ; that its essential evil is the deflection of man's nature from its highest good, the willing departure from the love that would guide and bless him. But man can understand this only when he understands Christ ; only when he has seen the seeking love of God becoming Incarnate that it may

seek and save the lost ; only when he learns that the work of God in dealing with the sinner is not vengeance or punishment, but redemption and salvation. Man must see sin in the light of all God's dealings with it to understand it.

And the more we ponder on this dealing of God with sin, the deeper will be our abhorrence of sin. The brighter the sun shines, the blacker the shadow we cast on the ground ; and the deeper our understanding of the love of God in Christ, the blacker will appear any willing violation of that love. Those who see God clearest are those who are most haunted by the thought of their own sinfulness ; those who have fullest experienced the wonder of the divine forgiveness, dread most the defiling touch of sin. We have but to read the story of a St. Paul or a St. Francis, and feel the sense of a real sinfulness that runs through their lives, to understand this ; and to understand, too, that our own sense of sin is a most imperfect one, inasmuch as it produces in us no such conviction of our own unworthiness as we see in them. We are deficient, we tell ourselves, in the sense of sinfulness ; but our real deficiency is a deficiency in the love of God. If we loved more, we should dread sin more.

For that is the real defect of us, not that we are sinners, but that we are not lovers. Our penitence is defective because it is not the expression of love.

That is one of the deeper lessons that we may learn from the penitence of the saints. When we read the lives of the mediæval saints, when we read, for example, such a book as "The Little Flowers of St. Francis," we are most of us, I fancy, repelled by the penitential side of the narrative, the hair shirts, the iron rings and plates, and so on. It seems very meaningless and quite contrary to all that we have been saying about love. But that would seem to be merely a surface appreciation of the facts, and a failure to read the mind of the saint. For we find that the penances themselves, strange modes of them as they seem to us, are the expressions of love and joy. *The saint loves suffering*; but he loves it because suffering was the mode of the Incarnate life of God. He suffered, that is what St. Francis grasps so firmly—he suffered for my sins, for the love of me. His appreciation of the work of our Lord as a work for him has a vividness that we fall far short of; and because his appreciation of the work of our Lord is so intensely personal, his response is intensely personal too. He wants to identify himself with his suffering master and to pass through all his experiences. If the Lord Jesus suffered for sin, and he is united to Jesus, he too must suffer for sin. There is no thought here of supplementing the atonement; the thought is of identifying oneself with it. Identity with our Lord, which the

saint seeks, will end in reproducing his experiences. If he was poor, let me be poor, the saint seems to say; if he suffered, let me suffer. I cannot claim to be one with him and have an utterly different life and set of experiences.

There is much here that we, in the beginning of the twentieth century, with our easy scorn of the forms of mediæval thought, would do well to ponder. But it would lead us too far afield to pursue the subject now. I have only wished to emphasise the truth that if we could escape sin the path is through penitential love,—penitence rests on love. We may cast the thought as we will in the forms of our own experience; but love we must, if we really repent.

And is not this also a truth that we need to emphasise to-day, and which was made emphatic by the mediæval penitent, that we need some proof to ourselves of the reality of our penitence? The heart is above all things deceitful, and it is very easy to imagine that we are penitent when there is small evidence of it. Of course you say at once that the evidence of repentance is the forsaking of the sin we repent of. Yes: no doubt. But is there not something deeper about the penitent than that? Is there not such a thing as a life of penitence? I mean an attitude toward life that results from our sinful condition. If I understand the great peni-

tents this is true; they are not content with dealing with individual sins; they feel that within them is a sinful nature. I do not understand that they think that this exposes them to punishment as wilful sin does, but that it is rather present to them as a state of imperfect being. It does not destroy their sense of forgiveness or their joy in forgiveness; but rather those very things demand of them an attitude of response which shows itself in such penitential discipline as I have noted; and also in what I want to note now, a life of service, a life of good works, as they would have expressed it. To put it otherwise, the life of the soul that is pardoned and at peace will be constantly expressive of that fact in joyful and holy activities, and the presence of these activities is evidence to the soul itself of its state; and if it is fruitless, it may very well doubt of its state.

This is reverting to a religion of good works? Perhaps so: I am not anxious about the particular theological tag that may be attached to it. What I am anxious about is to bring out the truth, as I believe it to be, that a forgiven life must of necessity be a fruitful life, and that its fruitfulness will be a sign of its penitential love. It is not a question of "purchasing the favour of God"; it is a question of expressing our love toward God, mingled with a sense, that seems to me inevitable, of our unworthiness and still imperfect state. I think that the mod-

ern world could very well stand a little more teaching as to the obligation and value of working for God, giving to God, directing all our activities to God, without the circumlocution of first seeing that what we do is socially valuable. I believe that there is a comprehensible truth to be extricated from the word *merit*, the truth that God loves the evidence of our love.

Some one has said that the real punishment of sin is being a sinner. And although the forgiveness of sin is full and free, that punishment abides in a certain desire for sin, or at least, of things sinful. That is one of the most discouraging things that we have to deal with in the attempt for spiritual improvement. I find that what really holds me back is, not attachment to this or that sin, but acquiescence in an inadequate standard of spiritual living. It is only momentarily that one wants to go on. And when one asks why, the answer seems to be, that "going on" implies, first of all, the breaking up of the adjustment of life to surroundings that make us comfortable. I am inclined to think that this clinging to the accustomed contains much of "original sin," that is, it is the inherent weakness in which sin finds it easy to plant itself, a rooted disinclination to effort to which sin finds it easy to appeal. The trouble is that forgiveness does not touch this difficulty, and the forgiven soul is still the victim

of its own spiritual conservatism. It remains, "yea, in them that are regenerated." Its corrective, of course, is the constant use of grace; but that is just what we shrink from. We need in this case the steady hand of deliberate discipline. Here, if anywhere, a "rule of life" is efficacious; a rule the tendency of which is to raise us above our ordinary level of activity and hold us there until we are accustomed to spiritual methods of work.

It is well to remember that the state of forgiveness is a negative state. From much that one reads, especially in the literature of conversion, one would infer the prevalence of a notion that the soul that is pardoned passes at once to a state that, at any rate, approaches sanctity, a state that has many of the marks of perfection. Now, no doubt, the forgiven soul, experiencing the joy of pardon, finds it easier for the time being to serve and love God. And if it has no ideal of holiness, if it is contented with the negative notion of innocence, it may find the Christian life, as it conceives it, an easy thing. But we who conceive the spiritual life of the Christian in a very positive way, as a life of continual advance in spiritual attainments, find that while forgiveness removes barriers and clears the ground, as it were, the real work of the Christian life remains to be done; it remains that we build on the foundation and build with those indestructible ma-

terials, gold, silver and precious stones, which will endure the fire of the Judgment. The settler in some newly-opened country concentrates his effort on stripping the ground of its age-long growth of tangled forest, and when that is done finds that he is at the beginning of his task of raising the fruits of the earth that are needful for his support. He cannot sit at the edge of his clearing and wait for them to grow. In that case he would speedily see his clearing resumed into the forest once more and his work all to do. That is what continually happens to souls; they feel the sickness and burden of sin and they are drawn to a repentance that is perfectly sincere, but they do not follow forgiveness with the active labour of spiritual cultivation, and remain undeveloped spiritually, even when, as is most likely, they do not slip back into the old indifference and selfishness of life. Therein lies the grave danger of "revivals" and "missions," or of anything that whips the soul into a momentary appreciation of its sinful state, driving it by the sting of an aroused conscience to seek pardon and peace; but also leaving it when that is accomplished with a sense that its Christian duty is fulfilled, and that any further Christian duties beyond more or less regularity in routine Christian living are matters of free choice, not of vital necessity.

The ideal we need to grasp is the ideal of con-

stant progress—the progress that carries us from the negative state of innocence to the positive state of sanctity. Between the two lies the Way of the Cross. We pass through this life as cross-bearers, faring from Bethlehem over Calvary to the light beyond. Glorious as is the truth contained in the forgiveness of sins, let us remember that that forgiveness is a beginning and not an end, a preparation of the soul for a future of unlimited growth.

I have not dwelt in this meditation upon what it was most obvious to dwell upon, the sacramental media of forgiveness. I have, I think, sufficiently spoken of them in other connections. Here, I care rather to dwell on some consequences of forgiveness. I trust that I have not left the impression on any one's mind by what I have just been saying that the absolution of the penitent is other than entire, that there is any reserve in the pardon that God grants. I have only wished to insist that spiritual weakness and immaturity are not subjects of pardon but have to be dealt with by the continual use of grace. All sins repented of are absolutely removed by the grace of absolution, and we are restored frankly to God's favour, and not held under any suspended sentence. It is important that we should remember this, for I find that there are souls that tend to hold over themselves their past sins and recur to them as though they were in

actual existence. I suppose that that is a reflection of our own imperfect forgiveness as exercised towards others. We find it extremely difficult to remove from our minds the impression made upon us by those who have wronged us. We think that we have fully forgiven; but when we remember the sinner we remember him *as* a sinner, not as a person whom we have fully forgiven. We forgive a thief or a liar, but we continue to hold them to the character of thief or liar, however sure we may be of their repentance. Forgiveness in the complete sense would seem to be a divine attribute—"I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." The entire absolution of the penitent is not only the blotting out of the sin but the blotting out of the memory of the sin. We have much difficulty in imagining this, in imagining that such as David and the Magdalen can stand high in the favour of God. Yet if they cannot, what does forgiveness amount to?

To be sure, God's forgiveness does what ours cannot do—cleanses the soul. It is not a change of attitude on his part toward the soul; rather, because of a changed attitude of the soul toward him he effects the purification of the soul. The streams, swollen by the spring rains, come down from the uplands filled with the soil they have torn from their banks as they passed; turbid and impure, they

are unfit for human use. But we pass them through the filter-beds and the water comes out clear and sparkling. So life, muddied and stained by sin, is passed through the filter-bed of repentance and comes out free from defilement, a purified life.

The soul that has experienced the divine pardon has had a new and vivid joy added to life. It has gone a step deeper into the meaning of love. In our own experience we find, do we not, that if we have really forgiven any one we have advanced in the love of them? There is a formal forgiveness that is a response to our conception of Christian duty but which leaves us cold to the person forgiven—I do not say that that is valueless. But I do say that it does not correspond to the divine forgiveness. And there is a forgiveness that involves an element of love and pity and which draws us toward the person forgiven. In the transaction there was a sense of a wrong that separated, and forgiveness has removed the cause of separation, and love and sympathy that had been held back flow out freely with new strength. This assumes the existence of love in our previous relations. That is of course not true of all our relations with one another, but it is true of all our relations with God. There is never any failure of the love of God toward us whatever obstacles we may have put in the way of its exercise.

In concluding, let us remember that when we say, I believe in the forgiveness of sins, we are implying, perhaps, more than the Creed intended to state: we are implying the belief in an obligation on our part to forgive sins. The extent of that obligation I understand when I study God's attitude toward sins and the way in which he exercises forgiveness. God forgives sins whenever any sinner honestly wants to be forgiven. The number of times he has sinned and the nature of the sin he has fallen into do not matter; the only thing that matters is his repentance. More than that: God does not forgive grudgingly; he loves to forgive. He is, as St. James says of the heavenly Wisdom, "easy to be entreated." Our hope here and hereafter rests on this quality in him. But that we have any right to exercise such a hope for ourselves surely rests on our possession of the same quality—that we, too, are *easy to be entreated*: that we cherish no thoughts of vengeance or sense of wrong, that we bear no grudges or harsh judgments. That is our ideal. I know that we grow to it slowly; that we find it difficult not to remember, not to be thrown back into a state of resentment when the sight of the offending person brings back the memory of the offence. But grow we must and do as Christ Jesus is being "formed" in us.

And it is so good to be forgiven, to feel the friend-

ship of God and know that we are safe in his love ;
to know that we are received to the pardoned life
with joyful welcome.

Kind hearts are here ; yet would the tenderest one
Have limits to its mercy ;—God has none !
And man's forgiveness may be true and sweet,—
But yet he stoops to give it. More complete
Is love that lays forgiveness at thy feet,
And pleads with thee to raise it ! Only Heaven
Means *Crowned*, not *Vanquished*, when it says
“Forgiven” !

THE TWENTY-THIRD MEDITATION

THE
TWENTY-THIRD MEDITATION
THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

Let us listen to the words of St. Paul —

WE shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.

Let us picture —

The day of the final Resurrection as it appeared to the mind of St. Paul. To him it was a “mystery,” a wonder-work of God, the meaning of which we are able to see dimly. To him, too, it was an imminent event—the trumpet might sound any morning; surely would sound, if the eager hopes of Christians were to be fulfilled, some morning soon. The world would be going on, unthinking; and then at

the trumpet's voice, a mighty change would pass over it. In the midst of their busy occupations men would be summoned before the Lord, they would be caught up to meet him in the air. And not only they, but all the host of the dead, the dead of a thousand generations, would be there. Let us try to think of our Lord returning, clothed in the garment of his glorified humanity, shining like the sun in his strength, attended by all the hosts of the angels, compassed by the saints. And then to meet him come this host of humanity *changed*, the mortal and corruptible having given place to the resurrection body, immortal and incorruptible. This is what St. Paul meant when he prayed, Thy Kingdom come. He worked and prayed and gave himself without stint that he might share in this triumph of the Lord from heaven. This to him was the ushering in of the final stage of God's work, the full manifestation of God's glory. Think how St. Paul's life was supported by vision. Once, before the Damascus gate, he had seen the heaven open and Jesus in the midst of blinding splendour, and the vision had changed his life and sent him forth to the arduous labour of his apostolate. Once again, he had been caught up into the "Third Heaven" and heard "unspeakable words" which had confirmed and strengthened him. And he looks forward to another heavenly sight when the Lord shall come in

his glory and all the holy angels with him to judge both the quick and the dead. This will be the crown and reward of all that has gone before; this will be the vindication of the life of the Christian, proving "their labour not in vain in the Lord."

Consider, first —

That the characteristic of the changed body of the resurrection that seems uppermost in the mind of the apostle, is its glory:—It is raised in glory. He is not thinking, as we are wont to think, of the constitution of the body and its relation to the material; rather, he is thinking of the body as the vehicle of something, and that something now in the resurrection so expresses itself through the body that the result is an effulgent splendour. All along, the important thing about our bodies has been that they were the instruments, the medium of the activities, of our spirits. But in our earthly life they are resisting mediums. The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and there is continual warfare. But the spirit of the Christian tends always to gain the dominance, to subdue the appetites whose seat is in the flesh. As the spirit gains, its powers flood the body and control it, but they do not dispense with it. But in the resurrection this mortal body is no longer the fit instrument of the spirit, and the bodily nature that we then receive is one adapted to the

spirit's use. Spiritual, immortal, incorruptible, it is in every way responsive to the spirit's needs; and the redeemed spirit that dwells in it floods it with its own glory, or rather, not its own glory, but the glory that is its because of its union with its Lord. That glory of God which shone in the *face* of Jesus Christ when he was transfigured before his wondering disciples, shines, too, in the faces of the redeemed of Christ, when their mortality being swallowed up in life, they become, in their own order, the medium through which he manifests himself.

Consider, second —

That our present time of discipline is the preparation of our spirits for their hour of victorious manifestation. They have to win their way to glory. Every victory gained over passion or appetite is an added strength to the spirit, making it more hopeful of future victories. Spiritual struggles do not end in themselves, as pointless combats with enemies that return again and again to the fight; they mark stages of advance toward the full growth of the spiritual powers that, when they have reached their maturity, will be able to express themselves completely through higher media. Of the nature of these media we can give no complete account for what the symbol *body* will mean when we add to it the notion *spiritual*, is not clear; but we are sure

that it means a medium of expression, not of repression, as we find our bodies now to be. There are so many of our spiritual attempts that are checked and thwarted by the incapacity of the body to co-operate with them. Our prayers, for instance, that we would fain make longer and of greater intensity, are foiled by the mere weariness of the body. There are so many hours when we would pass the time on our knees when the body, exhausted by the labours of the day, denies us the necessary strength even to maintain the attitude of prayer. To many of us the late evening, when the occupations of the day are behind us, is the time that we could best give to meditation; but the tired brain will not permit us, will not respond to the effort to think. Consider what it would be to find ourselves endowed with a medium of activity that was exactly responsive and adequately responsive to our slightest spiritual movement! Great zeal and great love will, indeed, effect something of that now. We read of saints that have so conquered the body by the spirit that they become at times unconscious of its existence, and impose upon it the will of the spirit. But only sometimes. Ordinarily the body is too strong for us and imposes its will. In the resurrection body this will of the spirit will be permanent and imperative, and will manifest itself without hindrance.

Let us, then, pray —

That we may attain to the glory of the resurrection. Let us pray that we may be found worthy to be numbered among those who shall attend our Lord at his coming.

O Merciful God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Resurrection and the Life; in whom whosoever believeth, shall live, though he die; and whosoever liveth, and believeth in him, shall not die eternally; who also hath taught us, by his Holy Apostle Saint Paul, not to be sorry, as men without hope, for those who sleep in him; we humbly beseech thee, O Father, to raise us from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness; that, when we shall depart this life, we may rest in him; and that, at the general Resurrection in the last day, we may be found acceptable in thy sight; and receive that blessing, which thy well-beloved Son shall then pronounce to all who love and fear thee, saying, Come, ye blessed children of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world. Grant this, we beseech thee, O Merciful Father, through Jesus Christ, our Mediator and Redeemer.

.

The evidential value of our Lord's resurrection was twofold: it was the seal placed upon the truth of his teaching, the vindication of his lifework, the

proof of his Messiahship—of these things God gave assurance when he raised him from the dead; but also his resurrection is the prophecy and pledge that we too shall rise from the dead. What the nature of that resurrection will be we can know only by inference from the resurrection of our Lord: it must mean in us what it meant in him, the resumption of activities in the completeness of human nature, but human nature modified to meet the new conditions under which we shall henceforth live. It is at once true that we shall be the same and that we shall be changed.

We shall be the same persons. The principle of identity that makes us one through the whole of our life is not anything depending upon the material organisation of our bodies: it is the spiritual personality that persists through all material change. We are the same persons from year to year, and know it by the evidence of memory, among other things. It is this person that at death is removed to the "other world," where it lives a life of conscious activity; it is the same person who will rise again from the dead.

And will rise embodied, with a body that belongs to it, and is the fitting medium of its action. I do not think that it is at all certain that we are ever in a completely disembodied condition. Some sort of envelope would seem to me to be not unsuitable, if

not actually required, as the medium of the created spirit's action under any conditions. The speculation that attributes bodies to all created spirits would seem to me very well grounded. Of course, when one says bodies, one is thinking of something quite different from the material body as it appears to the senses. But when one asks, What is matter? the answers that are given by the latest scientific investigation so remove *materiality* as we have been accustomed to understand it, from the ultimate constitution of material things, that one has no difficulty in thinking of the spirit at death going to the other world clothed in some sort of envelope which is the medium of its action. Nor has one any longer the old haunting difficulties about matter in relation to the body of the resurrection. All the old discussions about the identity of the resurrection body with the buried body, identity in material particles, I mean, have become quite pointless in view of our present knowledge of matter. And on the other hand, the changed body of the resurrection, that immortal, incorruptible, spiritual body of St. Paul's teaching, becomes intelligible; and, if we may suppose the continuous embodiment of the spirit in some sort of envelope carried over from the mortal body, and becoming the basis of the resurrection body, the speculative difficulty of the resurrection would seem to be reduced to as low terms as we

can expect in a matter so removed from experience.

In any case, as far as revelation casts light on the matter, the resurrected body is notable for its differences from, rather than its likeness to, our present body. We may sum this up by saying that its function is to transmit and mediate spiritual activities. It will be able to adapt itself to all forms of the spirit's work, even as our Lord's resurrection body adapted itself to his activity. I do not understand that our Lord's passing through closed doors into the room where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews was a miracle *in the same sense* that it would have been had he performed the same act before his resurrection; rather, it is intelligible as the result of the modification that has taken place in his body consequent upon his resurrection—the sort of modification that is in the mind of St. Paul when he says of those who are living at the last day that they shall be changed. We get at much the same result when we think of the impression that was made by our Lord on the Apostles after the resurrection. It was now an impression of great awe, again of entire strangeness, or again, of familiarity; and all, it would appear, because of the power of the spiritual nature to produce modifications in the bodily nature at will. In the resurrection, we conclude, the body responds to and expresses the will of the spirit without opposing any

opposition; and yet it remains a body, that is, a medium through which the spirit acts.

This union of body and spirit is essential to our being human. Our humanity consists in such union, and one of the grounds for thinking that the spirit in the state between death and the final resurrection is still embodied, is that without a body it loses its humanity. We cannot think of a body as an accidental and temporary thing in man; it is as eternal as we are, as necessary to our humanity as our spirit. And we know that our Lord, when he took our humanity took it permanently. In becoming man, he did not unite himself permanently to our spirit and temporarily to our body, but he united himself to both in an indissoluble union, so indissoluble that in the period between his death and resurrection his divinity was united with the body that lay in Joseph's tomb as well as with the spirit that was in Paradise. And we, being redeemed by him and regenerated and made one with him, are not united in will and thought with his divinity, but are united in body and spirit with his humanity and divinity. It is not part of manhood that is taken into God, but entire manhood; and it is not part of the individual man that is united to God through the extension of the Incarnation to us, but the entire man. The theories that dispense with the body, whether in the resurrection

of our Lord, or in our resurrection, ignore and abandon the whole notion of the Incarnation.

Because of this permanence of the body as a permanent element in our humanity, and because of its relation to the Body of the Incarnation, this human body has a relative holiness and demands to be treated with the highest respect. Under present conditions it is not only the dwelling-place of our spirit, but it is the dwelling-place of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, our resurrection itself is connected with this presence of the Spirit in us. "If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." His sanctifying work extends to the body wherein he abides. St. Paul elsewhere recalls Christians to a sense of what is implied in their vocation: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" This is the ground of the demand for purity: "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."

Sins of impurity are especially gross, as they imply a deep-seated revolt against the mind of the Spirit, and a surrender to the demands of the flesh. And it is not only the sins that we customarily recognise and class under the head of impurity that

fall under the condemnation of defiling the temple of God, but a large number of other sins that we do not give in our thought the same character. Obviously, we must class here the sins of gluttony, of abuse of the body in the matter of food and drink, and the pampering of the self that is involved in the inordinate luxury of our time. In the matter of food and drink, if one were to judge by the state of people's consciences, nothing is reckoned as sinful save actual drunkenness. But that is not the Biblical view. There can be no question that such over-indulgence in food and drink as amounts to sin is very common. To be called to the Christian life is to be called to a restrained and disciplined life. "I keep under my body," is its motto.

But do we keep under our bodies? Does not the increasing luxury of the times sweep more and more of us within its influence? So soon as we are possessed of anything we are possessed by it. Are we not becoming more and more dependent on things? And yet we cannot altogether dispense with things. Where draw the line? I read in my paper that such and such a woman has given a party at the expense of one hundred thousand dollars. Let us suppose that there is some newspaper exaggeration; the truth will be disgusting enough after all deductions have been made. And then I try to translate the event into terms of my own life. Is there any cor-

responding waste there? Any like failure in responsibility for the things that I possess? I am constantly compelled to deny appeals for help—why I am, perhaps, even irritable when appeals are pressed upon me—why? Is there any lurking sense that I am a bad steward and am wasting my Master's goods on objects of merely personal significance and self-indulgence? It is every priest's experience that by far the greater number of his congregation will decline to answer appeals for money, that, indeed, many of them resent such appeals. It is pretty certain that most of them honestly think that they cannot afford to give. But they are constantly spending money upon luxuries. Now, while it is tremendously difficult to lay down a programme in such matters, it is absolutely certain that luxury is one of the greatest dangers of modern life. We are a pampered and self-indulgent people. I do not see how we can be acquitted of constant sin against the body which is the temple of the Holy Ghost.

And in the matter of sins of impurity in the strict sense, are we not content with personal purity and excuse ourselves from any protest against sins of that class, acquiescing in the prevalent low standard of morals? There are many weak persons that allow themselves sinful practices because they feel that they are prevalent, that no one thinks much

about them, that society, while not approving, acquiesces in them as things that cannot be helped. Such people will be helped to abide by a high standard if they feel that that standard is really valued and emphasised in the minds of their acquaintances. It helps a young man or boy to be pure if he finds that purity is really valued and thought possible in the circle where he moves. But if purity is not expected of him and it is as respectable to be impure as pure, he is likely to fall. The low standard of the marriage relation that is evidenced by the declining birth-rate is surely due to luxurious habits and an expensive standard of living. Here again the pressure of Christian opinion might do much. And so it might do much against the "double standard" of purity that is one of the indications that our civilisation is still heathen at the core. One person can do little; but every person who is really caring and protesting in such matters is helping to create a Christian standard of life in the community.

There can be no doubt at all that the connection between the body and the spirit is so close that the state of the one has a distinct effect on the other. Especially is it true that a pampered body cannot be an organ of vision. The prophets and saints who have lived in the close friendship of God have been, I think without exception, men and women of dis-

ciplined life. They have been ascetics in the true sense of the word, that is, they have submitted their lives to strict self-restraint. We know in our own experience how what we call "a little harmless self-indulgence" deadens the spirit. If we have been living carefully and strictly, we have only to relax our care for a few days to find an immediate correspondence in relaxation in the spiritual life: our meditations and prayers become much more difficult, and our communions are much less followed up. Or we have but to pass a few days in society that is conspicuously careless in religious or moral tone to find that the association is telling on us; not that we have conformed to the tone of the surrounding society, but we are feeling less of repulsion and more of what we denominate toleration. The spirit is depressed by bodily influences and surroundings, and is less attentive and responsive to the divine voice of the Spirit. That is what those men of old felt when they forsook the world and betook themselves to the silence of deserts that they might be alone with God. Without criticising this, I am convinced that this is not the solution; it avoids or transfers the problem rather than solves it. I question if we have the right to change our condition in such wise even if we have the power—which most of us have not. The battle for the control and discipline of the body must be fought out

in the midst of society if it is to be helpful to society in the best sense; and surely we have that obligation in mind in the ordering of our lives. If it is harder to live a pure life in New York than it is in a desert, it is also a greater contribution to the cause of the Body of Christ of which I am a member and whose good I must minister to.

It is no doubt carrying too far our present notions of the physical body into the region of the spiritual to base our belief in recognition of one another in the future world upon the notion of physical likeness. We shall no doubt know one another, but there are other means of recognition beside physical means. Much of the speculation that has been indulged in in such matters is useless, and some of it worse than useless. There are many questions to which we have no answer. The sufficient answer to the question, Shall we be raised as we die? would seem to be St. Paul's saying: It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. Some speculators on the subject have held that we shall all be raised in the maturity of powers, no matter at what age we die; the child of tender age and the old man shall alike be raised in the maturity of manly vigour. But surely what we are raised in is the fulness of *spiritual vigor*, which has no equivalent in physical stature or units of time.

Our present life viewed as a life of preparation

for the resurrection needs to make emphatic the possible sanctity of material things through their associations with things spiritual. It is an application of the truth of the sanctity of the creation. There have always been tendencies in human thought to separate the material from the spiritual, and either to deny any connection or to put them in sharp opposition. Our own age is not without such tendencies. They find expression in impatience of any discipline and theories of the evil of pain or denials of its real existence. The sort of spirituality which strives to free itself from matter as a sort of degrading association strikes at the very root of the Incarnation, or, indeed, of creation. It ends in blurring all the fundamental Christian conceptions: sin, redemption, the sacramental action of God. And not much less to be deprecated is that view of Christian facts which regards the resurrection as spiritual and our future state as the state of disembodied spirits. We shall avoid such errors and their deep-seated consequences in this life, if we hold fast to the belief that our future life, however spiritual, will still be a life in a body, that is, the life of a spirit functioning through a containing envelope. We shall not then think lightly of sin nor rebel against pain, as passing phenomena incident to a temporary state from which death will release us. We shall not think of sin as "error" or

"imperfection," which yet is guiltless as having been imposed upon us by an imperfect environment; nor of pain as a spiritual mistake due to yielding to vicious thoughts. Rather, we shall see sin to be the revolt of the spirit from the will of God and failure to hallow him in all his works; and pain to be part of the discipline of life that rises through the power of its endurance to union with its Crucified Master. We shall look forward with joy to the time when united, spirit and body, to the Incarnate, we become perfectly that which we are now imperfectly, the glad and unresisting instruments of his will, and the partakers of his glory.

THE TWENTY-FOURTH MEDITATION

THE
TWENTY-FOURTH MEDITATION
THE LIFE EVERLASTING

Let us listen to the words of St. John —

AND I saw a new heaven and a new earth : for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away.

Let us picture —

Some of the details of the heavenly world as it appeared to the vision of St. John. It is at once a world of varied beauty and a world of throbbing life. In the midst of heaven is the throne of God, circled with splendour of the emerald rainbow ; for here, too, the mercy and the love of God are emphasised, and though lightnings and thunderings and

voices proceed from the throne, the rainbow spans them all. And before the throne is the Lamb, as it had been slain, and all the angel choirs of heaven stand about, and as the elders empty those vials of gold, which are full of the intercession of the saints, the ever-echoing song of heaven goes up and breaks in great waves of music about the throne of God and of the Lamb. Heaven is thronged with life; there are the living creatures and the elders; there are the hundred and forty and four thousand of the pure ones who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth—the flower of the earthly church. The church itself is revealed in its attained ideal. We, whose eyes are dimmed and blinded by the smoke and dust of the battle which we wage in the church militant here on earth, are permitted to see what it is that we are fighting for, what is the destiny of the church that we so readily despair of. We see it revealed, descending out of heaven, “having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even a jasper stone, clear as crystal.” This is our dwelling-place, our home, for all eternity. “The tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God shall be with them, and shall be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain:

for the former things are passed away." Let us take heart and fare on toward the Holy City.

Consider, first —

That all this gorgeous imagery of the Book of the Revelations is not mere poetic verbiage, the many-coloured flight of the Oriental imagination, indulging its passion for the picturesque in a revelry of splendid words. Its images stand for facts that have impressed themselves on the soul of the saint as he meditated on the heavenly world, but facts of so strange an order that he finds difficulty in translating them into human speech. As St. John piles image upon image, calling to his aid all that seems splendid or desirable to man, catching symbols from his art and from his worship, he is visibly struggling with the limitations of human thought and human language in the attempt to utter the unutterable. The realities of heaven transcend human experience and the possibilities of human expression: they can only be hinted at in image and symbol. This is the ultimate difficulty with all intense religious experience; it deals with realities of a spiritual order, which can only be felt, and not described. Our deepest communings with the world that is above sense we are unable to put into terms of sense, and, therefore, when we try to speak of them our words seem as idle tales to those whom we try

to let into our secret. The saints who have had immediate experience of the supernatural world, either, like St. Paul, give over the attempt to tell us what their experience was; or, like St. John, strive vainly to convey their meaning in words of another order of experience which only dimly and fragmentarily hint at what is in their mind. They are like children returning from some wondrous spectacle, whose attempts to describe to us what they have seen, make us certain of the reality of their experience rather than convey to us knowledge of what they saw. But we borrow from them their intense conviction of the reality that they have seen, and attempt to broaden our own experience till it shall measure, in some detail of it, with theirs. I, John, saw; but alas! there are no words adequate to tell what he saw. Why, then, try to tell us? Why not leave us, as St. Paul does, with the assurance that what he saw was unutterable?

Consider, second —

That this is why: that there may be enkindled in us, as we muse and ponder the unintelligible words, spiritual desire. The travellers who come back from far countries and tell of skies of another blue and sunsets of another splendour; of forests of strange mystery and birds of gorgeous hue, awake in us the desire to share their experience, and send

us forth to find it for ourselves. We know enough of the world that they have described to be sure that it is a possible world, we have touched the fringes of it in our own dull lives. So the Christian knows enough of the meaning of spiritual experience to feel that the saint is speaking to him of things of the same order of reality, that he needs only to push his own experience of the spiritual life a little deeper to verify for himself the reports of the saint. So he sets himself to the study of the higher spiritual experience; and feels that his capacity to pierce through the symbol to the reality, and get behind the form to the essence, is in some wise a test of his own spiritual vitality. Thus the Book of the Revelations becomes to us a challenge. If John saw, there is no reason why we should not, at least, see the meaning of his symbols, why we should not tear the heart out of them, and look through his eyes in at the open door of heaven. The condition is, that we should be what he was, pure in heart: the pure in heart see God. The desire for vision resolves itself into the desire for purity, and the response to purity is increased capacity for vision. As the soul grows pure its purity is evidenced by an increasing sympathy with all those things that pertain to the life everlasting, the permanent things that are eternal in the heavens, and are only passingly revealed in the life of earth. Do

these things attract us? Do the pages of the Revelations reflect themselves in our souls in feelings, in aspirations, in longings; begetting in us desire and hope which are perfectly real, though we cannot verify their objects, or communicate them to others? Do they beget in us, above all, desire for God?

Let us, then, pray —

That the door in heaven may be opened to us, and that we may see visions of God. Let us pray for the fervency of spiritual desire.

O God, of unchangeable power and eternal light, look favourably on thy whole Church, that wonderful and sacred mystery: and by the tranquil operation of thy perpetual providence carry out the work of man's salvation: and let the whole world see and feel that the things which were cast down are being raised up: that those things which had grown old are being made new; and that all things are returning to perfection, through him from whom they took their origin, even our Lord, Jesus Christ.

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I believe in the Life Everlasting—so we close our Creed with a note of aspiration and hope. We began with a profession of belief in God from whom all things came forth in the creation; we close still with a belief in God who shall end by gathering all things back to unity with himself. In him was life,

and the life was the light lightening every man, coming into the world, and guiding him on his dark way through the world; and in him is eternal life by participation in which man comes into union with his Maker and Redeemer, a union to be henceforth undisturbed and unbroken. The end of the present order is that the Lord shall be revealed from heaven, that mortality shall be swallowed up in life, and that in the new heaven and the new earth we shall receive our heritage as citizens of his eternal and everlasting kingdom. Now we look for "a city that hath foundations, whose maker and builder is God": then we shall enter into a city, the New Jerusalem which cometh "down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband"—a city that lieth foursquare in its achieved perfection.

A new heaven and a new earth—how wonderful the thought is! It touches us, as the cooling breeze of the sunset touches the head weary with the labour and heat of the day. Our whole nature goes out to it, we need it and we want it. There was a time, perhaps, when this world seemed all in all to us, when we were satisfied and wanted no other world. Its pleasures and its possibilities seemed limitless, and we desired nothing more than that we might possess it in ever greater fulness. One tries to picture to oneself something of the mind of a

boy brought up in one of those old castles of the Middle Ages where life was so shut in from the contact of the great world without. To the boy there life would come as a congeries of detached fragments, pieced together from many sources. It would come to him almost by chance, from passing travellers. As the evening fell, and the inmates of the castle were gathered in the hall lit by the flare of torches, the palmer would tell of the wonders of strange lands and strange folk he had met in his pilgrimage, and the adventures that befell those that sought the Holy Sepulchre. The merchant, as he spread his wares, would tell the news of the distant city and the latest reports from over sea. The wandering knight would have his tales of court and camp; and the troubadour, that sang in the courtyard, would by his songs awake the heart to dreams of love. What fascinating and exciting glimpses of the world beyond the hills would come to the boy-soul, and how he would long for his page's suit, that he might go out and join the gay throng at the court, or his first suit of armour, that he might go forth to win the spurs of a knight. We have all of us faced the world, perhaps, with something of that longing, and chafed against the restrictions that kept us from the world beyond the hills. It seems to spread out before us in limitless fields of conquest where we are sure we can win.

It looks so big and so good—this earth. It is filled with so many joyous things, stuffed full of possibilities. We could do so many things with it—and the whole earth laughed responsive to our hope.

But the day came when we passed from hope to experience, and instead of glorious conquests we came home wounded and weak from the battle. There was strife enough, and enough of adventure, but we wearied of the strife and the adventure palled. The words about world-weariness which we had impatiently protested against as the platitudes of the aged, or of those who had made failure of life, turn out to be the expression of our own mind. It may be a platitude, but it is also the truth, that the joy that the world has to give wears out, and leaves us longing for some deeper and more lasting joy. The sun goes westering and the shadows of the evening come trooping on, and how little fulfilment there has been of the promise of the morn. Our hopes are still unrealised and our ambitions unattained, or if there has been great measure of success there is small measure of permanent joy. Life has become dim and gray, and in so many cases bitterly disappointing, and we can no longer hope for much from it.

Unless, perchance, we hope for a good deal! Unless, perchance, the life has not yet realised its ambitions, not because they escaped its eager grasp, but

because its ambitions centre about the eternal things that can only be glimpsed here. The sunset has its sadness, but it has its glories too; if it tells of the fading day, it also throws its lingering beams out beyond the world. We look beyond "the flaming ramparts of the world" which once shut in our vision, out to that "beyond" which must soon cease to be vague dreamland, and become actual experience. A new heaven and a new earth—how attractive it sounds! We have found this so disappointing, we have met so much of pain and disaster! Pain and sin have formed so huge a part of human experience, as we read it. A new heaven and a new earth, *wherein dwelleth righteousness*, as another apostle saw it. And we turn our faces cheerily toward the sunset, and the purple and gold and crimson of it seem reflections of the rainbow glory that circles the throne of God. We fare forward with a wealth of new hope in our souls—the hope that we shall see God, God in his unveiled glory, surrounded by the hosts of the beatified.

The Saints of God, their wanderings done,
 No more their weary course they run,
 No more they faint, no more they fall,
 No foes oppress, no fears appall;
 O happy Saints, forever blest,
 In that dear home, how sweet your rest.

Let us recall, what I have, perhaps, insisted upon enough already, that the life everlasting, that eternal life of which our Lord speaks so often as the object of his mission, is not a future gift, but a present acquisition. The future life of heaven which we now believe awaits us, is but the unfolding of that germ of life that was implanted in us when we were sacramentally united to our Blessed Lord. We now have eternal life, and our power to live to the Spirit and not to the flesh is the manifestation of that life. Our experience of the workings of the Holy Spirit in us, our gradual ingathering of those fruits of the Spirit that are the evidences of our conformity to his will, are day by day revealing to us the nature of the life that in its fulness awaits us. The possession of these "fruits" ought to go far to remove from us that feeling that I suppose we all at some time experience, of the *strangeness* of heaven. It comes over us, when we think of the other world, that however glorious it shall be, it will, after all, be an unfamiliar world. It will look different, and our associations will be different, and the manner of our living will be different, and it is without question that we cling to the known and the familiar. You remember the story of the roadmender, how he sat by the bedside of a man dying in a London garret. There came a minister of God, and spoke of repentance, and of

the beauty of heaven. After he had gone the dying man lay and gazed blankly at the broken sky line of the tenement roofs, accentuated by the chimney-pots. And then, "'E said as 'ow there were golding streets in them parts. I ain't no ways perticler wot they're made of, but it'll feel natral like if there's chimbleys too."

Will it feel "natral like"—heaven? We are so afraid that it will not. But it happens to us sometimes to go to a place of which we know nothing, and the thing that helps us to go is that we have a friend there whom we are to meet. And there are friends in heaven. Above all, One Supreme Friend. And if we have known him here and are sure of his friendship, then there will be no strangeness there. The best preparation of the soul for heaven is in its possession now of the qualities that are eternal. Those fruits of the Spirit that we were just thinking of are permanent things which find their completest place of exercise in the other world. Love, and devotion to all pure things,—these will fit us for the life to come.

One imagines that one of the great joys of the Life Everlasting will lie in its sense of freedom. This life is, in so many ways, a disappointed life; we form so many plans that are not permitted to come to anything. There is a story of a woman who in the early days of the revival of the religious

life of England, felt strong vocation to enter a Sisterhood. She went to the convent; but she had been there but a short while when a relative fell ill and there was no one to take care of her, so the novice left the convent for this God-given work of nursing. It was years before she was released from it; but when freedom came she went joyfully back to the religious house, only shortly to be called out to the same experience. That was her life; one after another, people came to depend upon her, and she willingly gave her life to them, because it was God's will that she should serve him thus. It was only when she was an old woman, far too old to begin the Sister's life, that she was free. But through it all her desire of the religious life had not grown dim.

In heaven we shall see God's will so clearly and love it so much that there will be no sense of a disappointed life; no work to be done, whether willingly or unwillingly, which we feel to be aside from our true work. There will be no ambitions that we entertain that will be thwarted, because we shall be ambitious only to serve God. The life will expand in all gladness of service in the presence of our Lord.

Perhaps the greatest attraction that heaven has for us at present lies, not in the positive joys that it promises to us, but in what it promises to take

away. We long for heaven for what it is not. The limitations, the pains, the disappointments of earth weigh heavy on even the happiest of us. And where pain and sorrow are absent, we have the sense that they may be just lurking around the corner for us—they are never far from any life. The thought of being free from these, of having all tears wiped away from off all faces, is the strongest attraction of the life of the future. There always remains a certain unwillingness in our suffering, and even when we recognise it as a needful part of our discipline and the evidence of the Cross in our lives, we are fain to escape. And we read with ever new fascination the so wonderful saying of St. John, "There shall be no more sea." The sea with all that it stands for of restlessness and separation and loss, shall be done away. O that we might pass into a sealess world.

Yet are not such feelings the result of weariness, and, perhaps, of feelings mingled with a little of cowardice? If we value heaven, surely we shall value the time that is given us for preparation, and shall be eager to use every passing hour as one more opportunity, God-given, to make ourselves ready to meet him. There is so much to do! Our powers when we come, perhaps late in life, to realise our responsibility for their use, are so feeble and so immature; we have wasted so many golden days

of our youth far from the Father's house; we have shown so little of energy and zeal in the things that we have undertaken to do; that whatever of time may still be given us in the mercy of God, seems all too short. If our Lord worked in the sense of the coming night, how shall not we much more?

When we come to die we shall not find
The day has been too long for any of us
To have fulfilled the perfect law of Christ.
Who is there that can say, "My part is done
In this; now I am ready for a law
More wide, more perfect for the rest of life"?
Is any living that has not come short?
Has any died that was not short at last?

Whenso'er it comes—

That summons that we look for—it will seem
Soon, yea, too soon! Let us take heed in time
That God may now be glorified in us!

Surely it will look strange to us as we look back on this life from another world, that we did our work so ill and with so little sense of responsibility.

We shall marvel why we grudged
Our labour here, and idly judged
Of heaven.

And ought not the call to labour that runs so through the whole of the Gospel be a very welcome call? It is the call to attend to our highest interests. Life is aimless to so many; just what they

need to give it zest and savour is to have the way pointed to some worthy occupation. "Idlers all day about the market-place" may be so easily the account of our lives. And yet life may be so filled with teeming interests that are closely related to God and our preparation to meet him. One cannot escape the conclusion, in view of what we know of the life of the hereafter, that we shall all of us pass out of life, with many of our spiritual powers uncalled out, and, indeed, unsuspected. Anyone who has studied at all deeply the mysteries of the spiritual life will have become convinced that our ordinary living barely touches the surface of our spirituality. I am not thinking of those who ignore spiritual things altogether, and pass through life as though its possibilities were exhausted in their dealings with material facts, hardly recognising the fact of their own immortality. I am thinking of those who give a good deal of attention to their personal religion. They must feel that the energy of prayer is something that they conceive in a very slight degree; that the wonderful promises of God about prayer are unused by them; that they have not the spiritual strength to take God at his word. When we think what a prayer is when we throw our whole soul into it, and cast ourselves utterly on the word of our Lord, we understand how we fall short of praying as we should in our daily devotions. And what we

call service—does that at all approximate any divine ideal of labour for the kingdom of God And yet our Lord's words are never sterner than when he is speaking of the idlers and drones in the kingdom of heaven.

What are we set on earth for? Say, to toil;
Nor seek to leave thy tending of the vines
For all the heat of the day, till it declines,
And death's mild curfew shall from work assoil.
God did anoint thee with his odorous oil
To wrestle, not to reign.

When we shall come to the full participation in the life everlasting we shall pass into the peace of God—not fully till then. How good it sounds—peace! We have wanted that always, and we have not known where to find it. We have not understood that it meant just the giving up of the restless will into the keeping of God, and the seeking to live in union with God. *That* is heaven; heaven is not some far-off, inaccessible dwelling of Omnipotence; it is heaven to be at peace, to be one with God.

We have felt it, that drawing of God, here; through all the experiences of our lives there has been an attractive power, for God has never left us to go our way alone.

I am knit round
 As with a charm, by sin and lust and pride,
 Yet though my wandering dreams have seen all shapes
 Of strange delight, oft have I stood by thee—
 Have I been keeping lonely watch by thee—
 In the damp night by weeping Olivet,
 Or leaning on thy bosom, proudly less,
 Or dying with thee on the lonely Cross,
 Or witnessing thy bursting of the tomb.

And now, in heaven, God is revealed as he whom our soul loved, but saw only dimly. The union with him so often disturbed here, is finally accomplished.

And in its accomplishment another thing is attained—union with one another. We shall find then what the communion of saints means. It has stood there in the Creed; we have repeated it day by day, "I believe in the communion of saints"; and it is wonderful how little we have ever made of it. The Communion of Saints! We are so bound to the visible and tangible that we find it almost impossible to understand communion with those whom we cannot see, or who do not audibly answer us. Yet there they are, the great army of the Saints of God, passed from our sight to a higher state of being, but not therefore so changed as to be alien from human sympathies. The greater part of the Catholic Church is there, in the nearer presence of God. And surely we cannot conceive their wandering content on the banks of the River of Life, filled with

the glories of the City, and in utter forgetfulness and indifference to their brethren who carry on God's warfare here. They have eaten no lotus which has blotted from their memories the Church on earth. What they may know of the details of human life is not revealed to us; they know whatever God wills them to know. The important thing is not the extent of their knowledge but the existence of their sympathy, which they cannot have lost save by ceasing to be human. And being assured of their sympathy we are sure of their perpetual intercessions, the intercessions of those who knowing more perfectly God's will, can ask more surely in accordance with that will.

There is one more thought that I would recall to your minds: heaven means service. The idle, semi-heathen, pictures of heaven, as a dreamy enjoyment, are sensuous and repulsive. That sort of life is intolerable even here; intolerable, because we feel it unworthy of beings of noble destiny. What service God may call us to after this life, how eternity may be filled, we do not know, nor is it very important that we should. But we are certain that the universe is not so small but that there is work for us somewhere.

And work under what splendid conditions! No trammelling sin, no fierce battles with self first of all as to whether we will serve, but to go forth like

the angels in the joyous service of him whom we passionately love. Just to feel ourselves free to serve God with all the abounding powers of a purified life. If, amid all the drawbacks of earthly conditions, the service of God is still the supreme joy of a well-ordered life, what shall it be then,—what but joy unspeakable and full of glory?

Heaven is joy and peace and love. How we have striven for and longed for them here; and how we have felt that our thought of them was imperfect and our attainment of them fragmentary and disappointing. It could not be otherwise; for they are things only very partially attainable under the conditions of mortal life. They are things too great to be comprehended in terms of mortality. Our conceptions of them have been but echoes of a far-off harmony. We have caught broken glimpses of them as of things seen through the rifts of mountain mists. Our souls have been smitten with their beauty, but it has been as the tantalising beauty of fragments of Greek statues, a beauty of parts never seen united in a perfect whole. What we have seen and known has been enough to attract but not to satisfy; it has kept us always seeking a more perfect fulfilment, kept our thoughts always attentive and aspiring,

Here, through the feeble twilight of this world
Groping—until we pass and reach
That other, when we see as we are seen.

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